

EPA REGION III

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***** PM HOT LIST *****

Fracking opens fissures among states as drillers face many rules

FUELFIX Pennsylvania regulators ordered Chesapeake Energy Corp. to install pressure gauges costing as little as \$600 on 114 of its wells after natural gas contaminated drinking water last year. Officials rejected a call from environmental groups to order safety devices for all similar natural-gas wells, a requirement in neighboring Ohio. A boom in gas production using hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has led to a patchwork of local drilling standards. Now, several states are revising or formulating rules, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is studying the effects of fracking on drinking water and weighing nationwide regulations. "What you're seeing now is the federal government trying to get into the game of regulating hydraulic fracturing for the very first time," Ken von Schaumburg, a Washington-based attorney and former EPA deputy general counsel in George W. Bush's administration, said in an interview.

Stalemate continues for gas drilling in Delaware River Basin

NPR/NEWSWORKS *A stalemate continues when it comes to gas drilling in the Delaware River Basin. The four states that share the basin can't agree on how to regulate the industry. This is just one in a long line of interstate conflicts over the Delaware River. State Impact* Pennsylvania's Susan Phillips reports on the complicated ways water gets divvied up among the basin's residents. It takes a lot of water to quench the thirst of 15 million people. "Now right now in the river we have stage of elevation of about 6.3 feet...." Standing on the banks of the Delaware River in Milford, Pennsylvania, looking across to Montague, New Jersey, geologist Gary Paulachok talks about his job as the Delaware Rivermaster for the past 12 years. "...corresponds to a flow of about oh, about 3,500 cubic feet per second." He's the guy who makes sure all that thirst doesn't make the river run dry. Or more precisely, he makes sure the salt water line doesn't creep up to Philadelphia's intake pipes in the Northeast section of the city. "And that is a very significant reason why this flow is maintained at 1750, to keep the salt front down far enough down in the estuary, so it doesn't effect the city of Philadelphia's water supply or the water supplies in New Jersey." From his tightly packed room in an office park in

Milford, he tracks the vagaries of weather, the water releases of a nearby nuclear power plant, and other unwelcome surprises.

Does shale boom mean US energy independence near?

MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS TOWANDA, Pa. -- Ever since Richard Nixon's 1973 promise to attain energy independence, successive U.S. presidents all have pledged the same goal, even as foreign supplies composed a larger and larger share of the U.S. energy mix. Now, almost 40 years later, a measure of independence is within reach. But as this booming mountain town in northeastern Pennsylvania shows, the quest for independence involves both opportunities and trade-offs. It may surprise Americans who've lived through many years of dependence on foreign fuels, but in less than a decade the United States could pass its 1970s peak as an oil and natural gas producer. If that happens -- and many analysts think it's possible -- the United States would edge past Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world's top energy producer.... However, the biggest potential game changer for U.S. energy production is natural gas, which previously had been supplied largely from the Gulf of Mexico region. Just a few years ago, terminals were being built at U.S. ports in anticipation of importing natural gas; today, there's talk of exporting it. Technological advances have allowed drillers to go down almost 7,000 feet, smashing through rock formations and drilling horizontally, freeing trapped oil and gas that long had been considered inaccessible. "Shale gas, the biggest energy innovation since the start of the new century, has turned what was an imminent shortage in the United States into what may be a hundred-year supply and may do the same elsewhere in the world," Daniel Yergin, the world's most prominent oil historian, wrote in his new book about energy security, "The Quest."

Environmental Protection Agency has rough 2011, shows uneven progress

PUBLIC RADIO INTERNATIONAL It was a tough year for the Environmental Protection Agency — then again what's new? Environmentalists celebrated when the EPA raised concerns about the environmental impact of the Keystone XL pipeline. President Barack Obama asked for more studies on the pipeline, delaying its implementation to 2013. On the other hand, people were furious when Obama directed the EPA to re-examine its proposed guidelines for reducing smog. But one measure that got little publicity was a requirement that car manufacturers raise the fuel mileage of their new vehicles to an average of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2020, said Politico reporter Erica Martinson. "They've done a lot to encourage some trucks that have better fuel economy - that's something quite new. But, I think that it seemed to sort of slide by in the national eye," she said. Another major issue that will carry over into next year is the question of fracking. Not long ago, the EPA ruled that fracking could be damaging drinking water in Wyoming. Now, they're being asked to implement rules on the disposal of fracking fluid. Plus, they'll have to green-light fracking in the Marcellus Shale, which would be a big boon for the domestic natural gas industry. "(It) changes the game a lot for EPA, in the way they decide to do certain air emissions rules," Martinson said. "The price of natural gas has gone down so dramatically that it opens it up for a lot more options for regulating utilities and power plants."

Shale Gas Boom Spurs Race

WALL STREET JOURNAL The boom in low-cost natural gas obtained from shale is driving investment in plants that use gas for fuel or as a raw material, setting off a race by states to attract such factories and the jobs they create. Shale-gas production is spurring construction of plants that make chemicals, plastics, fertilizer, steel and other products. A report issued earlier this month by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC estimated that such investments could create a million U.S. manufacturing jobs over the next 15 years. West Virginia is vying with Pennsylvania and Ohio to attract an ethylene plant that Royal Dutch Shell PLC said it plans to build in the Appalachian region to take advantage of the plentiful new gas supplies. Shell is due to announce a site early in 2012. Ethylene, produced from ethane in natural gas, is used to make plastics and other materials that go into an array of products, including pipes, paint and antifreeze. West Virginia's legislature, meeting in a special session, passed a bill this month setting rules for shale gas drilling and production. The legislation ensures "a reliable supply" of shale gas in West Virginia and should dispel regulatory uncertainty that could slow investment, Keith Burdette, the state's commerce secretary, said in an interview. The U.S. chemical industry is the biggest potential winner from the shale boom—which involves a technique opposed by some environmentalists called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to obtain gas locked in rock formations—but other industries also see benefits.

The end of coal plants in Hampton Roads?

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS Two plants slated to close; construction of another is delayed By Cory Nealon. The Yorktown Power Station and Chesapeake Energy Center, the two largest coal-fired power plants in Hampton Roads, burn on average 6,700 tons of coal every day. The plants, which date to the 1950s, create enough electricity for 260,000 households. Yet both will soon stop burning coal, which is subject to new federal rules that aim to cut the amount of mercury, ozone and other pollutants entering the nation's air and waterways. Ceasing those operations, combined with a stalled effort to build a massive coal-fired power plant in Surry County, has put Hampton Roads on a path away from the potent, yet dirty, fossil fuel. The shift has the potential to reduce premature deaths, asthma and other respiratory ailments, as well as spur investment in renewable energy. But it also may result in higher utility bills, put pressure on other areas of Virginia to make up for the lost power, and cause further investment in a controversial method of obtaining natural gas. It is for those reasons that the possible abandonment of coal as an energy source in Hampton Roads is the Daily Press' top science and environment story of 2011. ...Dominion plans to convert part of the Yorktown plant to natural gas, a fossil fuel that burns cleaner than coal. The decision is based, in part, on new discoveries of gas buried underground in shale formations.

Mediation under way in Charleston for massive Monsanto class action lawsuit

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL CHARLESTON -Plaintiffs in two related lawsuits against Monsanto Co. gathered Dec. 27 at the Charleston Marriott Town Center to negotiate a possible settlement in a massive class action lawsuit that alleges the company exposed people to toxins. Stuart Calwell, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said he is hopeful he and attorneys representing the chemical company can reach a settlement this afternoon. The attorneys are working on the agreement with two circuit court judges who were assigned to the

massive case. Calwell and the others are negotiating a settlement for 127 plaintiffs who claim they were exposed to dioxin released into the air and water by a Monsanto-owned plant in Nitro. Plaintiffs filed the suit in 2004 against Monsanto, Pharmacia Corp., Akzo Nobel Chemicals Inc., Akzo Chemicals Inc., Flexsys America Co., Flexsys America LP, Flexsys International LP and Flexsys International Co., seeking medical monitoring. Plaintiffs claim from 1948 to 1969, Monsanto manufactured herbicides at its Nitro chemical plant, which created dioxin as a byproduct. According to the suit, this toxic byproduct was released into the air at the old Monsanto plant from burning waste materials. One lawsuit, which Calwell called the "Allen case" was filed several years ago. Another case, the "Carter case" was filed last year. Both cases ask for medical monitoring expenses as well as property damages caused by the dioxin contamination.

Op-Ed: Springtime for Toxics

NEW YORK TIMES Here's what I wanted for Christmas: something that would make us both healthier and richer. And since I was just making a wish, why not ask that Americans get smarter, too? Surprise: I got my wish, in the form of new Environmental Protection Agency standards on mercury and air toxics for power plants. These rules are long overdue: we were supposed to start regulating mercury more than 20 years ago. But the rules are finally here, and will deliver huge benefits at only modest cost. So, naturally, Republicans are furious. But before I get to the politics, let's talk about what a good thing the E.P.A. just did. As far as I can tell, even opponents of environmental regulation admit that mercury is nasty stuff. It's a potent neurotoxicant: the expression "mad as a hatter" emerged in the 19th century because hat makers of the time treated fur with mercury compounds, and often suffered nerve and mental damage as a result.

Some Good News for the Chesapeake Bay

SEVERNAPARKPATCH Underwater grasses on the Susquehanna Flats survived Tropical Storm Lee and findings by researchers point to decreasing size of dead zones. Lately it seems that most every article I read about the health of the Chesapeake Bay deals with the ongoing problem of trying to restore the Bay and its tributaries. During the past week, two stories have come to my attention that deal with something positive concerning the health of the Bay. Last week the Baltimore CBS affiliate, WJZ, reported that underwater grasses on the Susquehanna Flats survived the horrific discharge of silt-laden flood water that flowed through the Conowingo Dam from the Susquehanna River after Tropical Storm Lee. It was initially feared that force of the water discharged through the floodgates at the dam would severely damage the grass beds in that area. Lee Karrh of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources told WJZ reporter Alex Demetrick that "The good news is, they're still there," referring to the grass beds on the Susquehanna Flats. An aerial survey revealed that most of the grass beds had survived the storm.

Changes are likely to Md. clean bay plan

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWS (Dec. 23) Maryland's plan for reducing pollution flowing into the Chesapeake Bay, which was due to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by midnight Dec. 15, is likely to be revised with more detail before the federal agency decides in July whether and how to alter it. Environmental groups, meanwhile, say the state's local

governments, whose individual documents were used by the Maryland Department of the Environment to craft the statewide Watershed Implementation Plan, must commit to more specific pollution-reduction strategies and come up with ways to pay for them. "Apart from a few exceptions, they are weak across the board," said Claudia Friedetzky, conservation representative with the Maryland chapter of the Sierra Club, speaking of county plans submitted by the Nov. 18 deadline that the Sierra Club was able to review. Environmentalists say excessive nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment are major bay pollutants. They have identified agricultural runoff, sewage treatment plants, septic systems, lawn fertilizers and vehicle exhaust as among the culprits. Baltimore County's plans stood out as excellent for the level of detail and scientific underpinnings, Friedetzky said. St. Mary's and Dorchester counties were good because they identified solid next steps, she said. Friedetzky said that Charles County's plan did not include local total maximum daily load standards for the Mattawoman Creek and the Port Tobacco River. TMDL refers to the maximum pounds of nutrients per year a watershed can handle before it is considered impaired, according to the EPA.

Northern Neck fears effects of fishing limit

VIRGINIA BUSINESS MAGAZINE An oily, bony fish that usually measures less than seven inches will be the focus of intense and emotional public comment starting next month. The outcome of the discussion could have a big effect on the economy of Virginia's Northern Neck and the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), an interstate regulatory board, will invite public input on a proposal to cut back on Atlantic menhaden harvesting, possibly by about one-third, starting 2013. The average annual landings of menhaden on the East Coast from 2000 to 2009 was about 427 million pounds. Of that total, Virginia accounted for an average of 388 million pounds a year, making Reedsville one of the largest commercial fishing ports in the U.S. If ASMFC decides to limit the catch...

***** MORNING HOT LIST *****

Editorial: Victory on mercury: Obama's EPA chooses health over pollution

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Sunday) President Barack Obama held firm last week on his administration's plan to enact the first national controls on mercury and other airborne toxics generated by electric utilities. The decision is good news for Pennsylvania, and especially its children and young mothers, since the state's mercury emissions are second only to Texas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the new regulations will provide \$90 billion of public health and economic benefits a year -- as much as \$9 for every dollar spent to reduce pollution from power plants. More important, EPA officials say the rules will prevent 11,000 premature deaths each year, along with 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 cases of childhood asthma symptoms and 6,300 cases of acute bronchitis in children. Congress directed the EPA in 1990 to address mercury pollution through amendments to the federal Clean Air Act. Mercury is a potent toxin that attacks the brain and central nervous system, and is especially harmful to young mothers and children. While the new rules have attracted predictable

opposition from lobbies and politicians who say they could cost jobs and lead to higher utility bills, anger from industry is not universal. A national coalition that claims to represent 125,000 businesses, some of them Fortune 500 companies, thanked the Obama administration for providing clarity they need in the new regulations to move forward.

Editorial: Long-awaited pollution controls

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT (Monday) The sooty handwriting has been on the wall for years now. Long-discussed restrictions on coal-fired power plants are now in effect, likely prompting electric companies to shut some down rather than undertake costly improvements. Critics predict all manner of calamity as a result, including blackouts. But a recent Associated Press survey of power companies indicate that service interruptions are unlikely and that many of the plants are already near or past their expected life span. According to The AP, the new regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency will hasten the closure of more than 32 mostly coal-fired plants and could lead to the shutdown of 36 others nationwide. That's about 8 percent of America's coal plants. The transition won't be easy. Plant employees will lose jobs if they're not transferred, and localities will lose tax revenue if the facilities aren't replaced or if equivalent investments aren't made in other energy sources. But the changes have been a long time coming. The average age of the affected plants is 51 years, The AP found. Many of them were due for closure or upgrading years ago, but power companies were allowed to fend off installation of modern pollution controls.

Editorial: A Christmas present from the U.S. EPA

CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL The latest swipe at coal-fired power will cost both jobs and ratepayers. Americans hoping for a faster rate of economic growth and jobs got a nasty present this week from the Obama administration. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued what may be the most expensive rule it has ever issued. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson heralded this regulatory achievement as "historic" and "a great victory. For whom? The EPA says its new rule will cost \$9.6 billion, which the Wall Street Journal called "a gross, deliberate underestimate." The new regulation will score a direct hit on the coal industry. It will cost coal-fired utilities billions. It will force business and residential customers to pay even higher bills. It will compromise the reliability of the electric power grid. And it will cost jobs. The agency thinks the rule will prevent 11,000 premature deaths and 4,700 heart attacks a year by 2016. The standards are aimed at forcing coal-fired power plants to reduce mercury pollution by 90 percent, acid gases by 88 percent, and sulfur dioxide by 41 percent - in only four years. A compressed schedule could force some utilities into what the Journal called "a de facto EPA receivership and expose them to lawsuits and other liabilities." Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., have co-sponsored a bill that would at least extend the time frame for compliance by two years. If that is not done, Manchin warns, "the short-term consequences for the economy would be devastating."

Coal extraction poses climate challenge for Obama administration

WASHINGTON POST (Sunday) When it comes to coal mining in the United States,

environmentalists have a simple goal: End it. For the Obama administration, it's a little more complicated. Since taking office nearly three years ago, the administration has restricted coal-mining waste from being dumped into streams and imposed new pollution controls on coal-fired power plants. But on the fundamental question of whether the government should halt federal leasing, the administration's answer has been: not yet. Instead, the federal government is analyzing the environmental impact of extracting coal from public land, drawing fire from both sides. Environmentalists say such action doesn't go far enough, while industry officials question why it would pursue this analysis in the absence of a federal law on greenhouse gas emissions. "On some level, the twin goals of increased fossil fuel production and reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are necessarily in conflict, at least without a national cap on emissions," said Paul Bledsoe, who was a special assistant at the Interior Department during the Clinton administration. "This fundamental contradiction in current U.S. energy policy is playing out on the Keystone oil pipeline, in our public lands policy and throughout the energy economy." Interior Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes said the agency is "committed to evaluating greenhouse gas emissions among the many important factors we analyze when considering whether or not a coal extraction lease sale makes sense for the environment, the economy and America's energy security."

Coal's Power: Coal energy output outstrips gas, nuclear combined

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE(Sunday) The coal called "king" in this region, an acknowledgment of its presence and power, sometimes seems in danger of facing a coup. Just in the past week, federal agencies announced stricter regulations on pollution for coal-fired plants, with even former Pittsburgh Steeler Jerome Bettis filming commercials to strong-arm legislators into passing the restrictions. Add into the mix a natural gas boom that's overwhelming the region and its lawmakers. Then there are the alternative options such as nuclear and wind energy that have won endorsements from the White House. With the pressure coming from all sides, the monarchy appears threatened. But a look at coal's ever-overpowering numbers suggests a different narrative and proves the black rock remains as much a local institution as the football team for which Mr. Bettis once lined up in the backfield. The state still contains so much coal that it produces more power than its citizens and businesses need, with the extra used to light major metropolitan zones along the heavily populated East Coast. The Keystone state's 27 billion tons of coal have fed several major coal-burning plants that generate electricity as well as controversy, as environmentalists and officials push for cleaner-burning fuels. Over the next week, the Post-Gazette's Business staff will examine this bedrock's fundamental contributions to the Pittsburgh region's identity, economy and future: We'll track its place in the courtroom, the laboratory, the university, the rivers and the world.

258-mile pipeline in Pa., W.Va. proposed

JOHNSTOWN TRIBUNE DEMOCRAT JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — A Texas company is maneuvering to construct a pipeline to carry Marcellus Shale natural gas across Pennsylvania. The Atlantic Access Project, a proposed 258-mile pipeline using 36-inch pipe, would move fuel from the rich Marcellus gas fields of western Pennsylvania and the panhandle of West Virginia to eastern gas-hungry markets. "We are early — early in this process," Christopher Stockton, a

spokesman for Houston-based Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., said last week. The company filed a pre-application, amounting to a request for a review of project plans, with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. "It's a big project," Stockton said. "It will require a lot of input from a lot of people, agencies and organizations." The project could cost \$1 billion, according to information from U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster. He is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. Stockton said the company, commonly referred to as Transco, is owned by The Williams Co. Inc. and there is not a final figure on the project's estimated cost. "It will easily be in excess of \$1 billion," he said. When the pipeline is completed, it would carry 1,350,000 dekatherms of natural gas per day, or enough energy to provide winter heat for 1,350,000 homes for one day, according to calculations by Penn State's Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research. Documents recently filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission show the pipeline would be linked to an existing Transco pipeline in South Carolina, an existing receipt point in Rivervale, N.J., and to a Transco station in York, Pa.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

From Early Bird New Jersey strives to regain its recycling reputation (Monday) In 1987, New Jersey became the first state in the country to require residents to recycle, a milestone in the environmental movement that set off a massive surge in recycling around the country. For years in the Garden State, never perceived as the most environmentally pristine of places, recycling rates grew and grew. But in the last decade and a half, despite a global environmental movement that has turned words such as *green* and *sustainability* into popular lingo, New Jersey's recycling program has faltered. The proportion of the 10 million tons of trash picked up by municipal collectors each year that is recycled fell from 45 percent in 1995 to 37 percent in 2009, the latest year for which data were available. Over that same period, the national recycling rate increased by almost a third, to 34 percent, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (Pennsylvania does not keep comparable data.) There is no less stuff being recycled in New Jersey - 3.6 million tons by the latest count - but the state's trash stream has increased by such a degree that simply holding steady has meant that what was once a paragon of the recycling movement has lost pace with the rest of the country. "It's quite the opposite of what's happening in most of the world," said Allen Hershkowitz, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Each ton of trash not recycled means more waste dumped in a landfill or burned in an incinerator, options that state environmental officials have been trying to get away from since they consolidated the state's numerous municipal landfills in the 1980s. "There are consequences," said Jane Kozinski, assistant commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Landfills, no matter how well designed, do emit toxic pollutants into the environment . . . and there are economic factors. Recycling is a job generator." A 2001 survey by the Northeast Recycling Council, a regional industry group, found that 27,000 people worked in the state's recycling industry. The EPA-funded study has not been repeated since.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

From Early Bird Editorial: Victory on mercury: Obama's EPA chooses health over pollution (Sunday) President Barack Obama held firm last week on his administration's plan to enact the

first national controls on mercury and other airborne toxics generated by electric utilities. The decision is good news for Pennsylvania, and especially its children and young mothers, since the state's mercury emissions are second only to Texas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the new regulations will provide \$90 billion of public health and economic benefits a year -- as much as \$9 for every dollar spent to reduce pollution from power plants. More important, EPA officials say the rules will prevent 11,000 premature deaths each year, along with 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 cases of childhood asthma symptoms and 6,300 cases of acute bronchitis in children. Congress directed the EPA in 1990 to address mercury pollution through amendments to the federal Clean Air Act. Mercury is a potent toxin that attacks the brain and central nervous system, and is especially harmful to young mothers and children. While the new rules have attracted predictable opposition from lobbies and politicians who say they could cost jobs and lead to higher utility bills, anger from industry is not universal. A national coalition that claims to represent 125,000 businesses, some of them Fortune 500 companies, thanked the Obama administration for providing clarity they need in the new regulations to move forward.

From Early Bird Coal's Power: Coal energy output outstrips gas, nuclear combined (Sunday) The coal called "king" in this region, an acknowledgment of its presence and power, sometimes seems in danger of facing a coup. Just in the past week, federal agencies announced stricter regulations on pollution for coal-fired plants, with even former Pittsburgh Steeler Jerome Bettis filming commercials to strong-arm legislators into passing the restrictions. Add into the mix a natural gas boom that's overwhelming the region and its lawmakers. Then there are the alternative options such as nuclear and wind energy that have won endorsements from the White House. With the pressure coming from all sides, the monarchy appears threatened. But a look at coal's ever-overpowering numbers suggests a different narrative and proves the black rock remains as much a local institution as the football team for which Mr. Bettis once lined up in the backfield. The state still contains so much coal that it produces more power than its citizens and businesses need, with the extra used to light major metropolitan zones along the heavily populated East Coast. The Keystone state's 27 billion tons of coal have fed several major coal-burning plants that generate electricity as well as controversy, as environmentalists and officials push for cleaner-burning fuels. Over the next week, the Post-Gazette's Business staff will examine this bedrock's fundamental contributions to the Pittsburgh region's identity, economy and future: We'll track its place in the courtroom, the laboratory, the university, the rivers and the world.

From Early Bird Coal's Power: Mining issues are overshadowed by shale gas boom (Monday) With attention focused on Marcellus Shale, a reminder that an older energy resource also can cause plenty of headaches. His father was a globe-trotting coal engineer; his grandfather, a superintendent with Harmon Creek Coal. Although Donald D. Saxton Jr. followed a different career path, he eventually returned to his family roots -- hanging a shingle as a coal and energy attorney in Washington County. With so many energy firms flocking to Pittsburgh and Washington County -- and with so many established firms opening up their own energy practices -- because of the Marcellus Shale natural gas land rush, the coal side of the energy law practice is getting lost in the mix, Mr. Saxton said. "Everybody has kind of forgotten about some of the issues from coal," he said. That includes subsidence, drainage and water contamination issues, mineral and surface rights, and more.

Ethane cracking plant in region could create jobs

HARRISBURG -- State officials are engaged in a high-stakes but low-key battle to land a chemical plant that would make gas from the Marcellus Shale even more valuable. Prefacing his comments by noting the confidentiality agreement that he and others have signed, Pennsylvania's top economic development official confirmed that the state has been aggressively wooing several companies interested in locating an ethane cracker in Appalachia. Such a facility has been the source of speculation in news reports for months. A spokeswoman for energy giant Shell says three states -- Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia -- remain finalists for the plant. A cracker, as its commonly known, breaks down liquid gas compounds from the "wet" gas that is common in the state's southwest into ethylene, a raw material used to make plastics.

New technology makes mines safer

Third in a series. In the earliest days of coal mining, when a working lamp and a canary were the best safety tools available to the men who entered the dark underground shafts, it was common knowledge that many would never return. "When you cut coal, you liberate methane," explained Justin K. McElhattan, president and CEO of Findlay-based gas detection company Industrial Scientific Corp. "In many other industries you typically only have bad gas hazards when you have something going wrong. In coal mining, literally every second that you're cutting coal, you have to deal with methane escaping and with what you're going to do with that." Today, Industrial Scientific is taking a high-tech approach combined with behavioral observation in an effort to eliminate deaths in coal mines and all other workplaces. "There's a tremendous amount of insight that a gas detector can deliver. If we're not getting that insight out of the instrument, we might as well just give them a canary," said Mr. McElhattan. As late as the 1940s, thousands of miners each year died because of methane gas poisoning and explosions in coal mines, according to David D. Wagner, the company's director of product knowledge. By 1949, enforcement of new labor laws helped lower the count to hundreds of deaths annually.

ALLENTOWN MORNING CALL

From Early Bird Advocates expect fight over clean air regulations In September, President Obama announced that his administration would not adopt new smog-pollution guidelines that were recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency after a two-year review of the 2008 Bush administration standards for ground-level ozone. Criticizing Obama on the issue, the American Lung Association said the Bush model "failed to protect public health, failed to follow the scientific community's recommendations, and was legally indefensible." When it occurs at ground level, ozone gas is a primary component in the creation of smog. Children, the elderly, people active outdoors and people with poor lung health can be adversely affected when ozone exposure exceeds certain levels. Ozone gas and smog exposure have been linked to a variety of respiratory problems, including permanent lung damage and even death with repeated exposure. Like other metropolitan areas, the Lehigh Valley suffers from repeated exposure to potentially high ozone levels in the summer, when chemical reactions between ground-level ozone and volatile organic compounds are exacerbated by hot weather.

HARRISBURGH PATRIOT NEWS

From Early Bird Water, sewer and trash rates vary widely among municipalities The price homeowners paid for sewer rates in 2011 ranged from \$50 a year in Paxtang to \$980 a year in a

portion of Monroe Township. Water rates varied less widely. Many municipalities use either Pennsylvania American Water or United Water for public water service. A United customer using around 4,000 gallons a month paid about \$460 a year. A Pennsylvania American Water company customer paid about \$580... Harrisburg has the highest trash rates in the midstate, about \$388 in 2011. The cheapest is New Buffalo in Perry County, where the municipality picks up people's trash for free. Most range from \$150 to \$300 a year. Here is what you might not know about sewer, water and trash rates.

WILKES-BARRE TIMES LEADER

From Early Bird New fuel for coal vs. gas debate Wilkes-based group finds natural gas has smaller greenhouse footprint. A research group based at Wilkes University recently revised its position on whether burning coal or natural gas has a worse impact on the environment and global warming. Based on several new studies, the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research of Northeastern Pennsylvania concluded that, contrary to findings in an April study by researchers at Cornell University, natural gas produced from Marcellus Shale wells has a lower greenhouse footprint than coal. According to the institute essay, the use of natural gas and the other fossil fuels for energy releases greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. Those gases are thought to increase global temperatures. Studies conducted between 2000 and 2007 suggested that natural gas produces fewer greenhouse gases than coal, especially when used to generate electricity. But a study by a team of researchers at Cornell University published in April found that extracting natural gas from shale released large quantities of methane – a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. The researchers concluded that when the full life-cycle of energy extraction, delivery and use is considered, shale gas produces up to twice the greenhouse gas emissions compared to burning coal or oil – especially when viewed over a 20-year time span. However, seven analyses released in the summer and fall of 2011 came to a different conclusion than the Cornell study. All seven found that natural gas produces 20 percent to 60 percent lower greenhouse gas emissions, especially when used for electrical generation and when viewed over a 100-year time span.

From Early Bird Gas pipelines bring \$750M sale price CLARKS SUMMIT – A day after announcing a \$750 million deal to sell Laser Northeast Gathering to pipeline giant Williams Partners, Thomas Karam said he's looking for other ways to profit from the Marcellus Shale gas boom. "I think there are going to be many opportunities for investment," said Karam, CEO of Laser parent Delphi Midstream Partners, on Friday. Karam and others formed Delphi in mid-2009 and acquired Laser in July 2010. At the time, "All it had were a couple of contacts and a few easements," Karam said. After acquiring more easements and contracts with drillers that needed to move gas to market, Delphi built the first part of what Karam described as a three-phase project. In October, "we began to flow gas" to the Millennium interstate gas pipeline in Broome County, New York. The current 33 miles of pipeline will expand to about 75 miles, Karam said, reaching into northern Wyoming County and linking the large Tennessee and Transco interstate pipelines that cross the Northeast. "It creates great optionality for Williams customers," Karam said. All 33 Laser employees have received job offers from Williams, and most have accepted. "Our people have been building pipelines in Northeastern Pennsylvania for decades," Karam said. The deal includes some smaller Laser assets in Texas. Williams will pay Delphi \$300 million cash and approximately 7.5 million Williams Partners common units. Karam declined to say how much Delphi had paid for Laser or invested since the acquisition.

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

From Early Bird Energy kept region afloat Williamsport was the seventh fastest growing metropolitan area in the nation this year, something the head of the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce attributes to the rise of the gas industry atop the Marcellus Shale. "There were six above us," said Vincent Matteo, chamber president and CEO of the rankings by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. "Four to five, or six, were all energy-related. Energy is where the money is being made. "The rest of the economy is not good. The national unemployment rate is 9 percent. It was never that high in my lifetime that I've been aware of," he said. "The gas industry) is benefiting us tremendously. That's what is driving the growth." Anadarko Petroleum Corp. expanded its facility this year. The company began with 5,000 square feet of space at 33 W. Third Street in November 2009 and five employees. By October, it had 30,000 square feet and 63 employees. Champion Technologies, the second largest privately-owned chemical company in the world, became the first tenant at the natural gas industrial park in Wolf Township. Local officials and developers broke ground Oct. 28 at the 45-acre development at Boak Avenue and Woolen Mill Road.

The gas worker: Economic hope in bleak timesThe region's gas drilling boom in 2011 attracted, more than ever, an influx of workers to the area to accompany the attachment of the local labor force to the industry. It was hard to drive down most major thoroughfares, go to a restaurant or stay in a motel or hotel in the region without feeling the gas worker presence. The population of white pickup trucks and Oklahoma and Texas license plates, not to mention the demand for good Southern barbecue, clearly is on the rise. So what does that local impact sound like? Jeremy Street, of Cogan Station, worked for a local heating and air conditioning contractor before being hired by Sooner Pipe. "This company offered the best total package as far as benefits and pay," he said. "Family-wise, I was better off here." Andrew Harvey, of Montoursville, worked for a local bottling company before taking a job as an equipment operator with Frac Tech Services International, a hydrofracturing company on Reach Road.

TOWANDA DAILY REVIEW

From Early Bird Editorial: EPA ruling was long overdue There will be a lot less coal in stockings - and lungs - on future Christmases due to a new rule adopted last week by the Environmental Protection Agency after a 21-year battle. Despite abundant evidence of the harm caused to humans and wildlife by highly toxic mercury, the debate over the regulations to reduce its emission by power plants has raged since EPA was authorized to address mercury by 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act. Finally, the EPA issued rules last week to reduce by 91 percent the amount of mercury - more than 33 tons a year - still pumped into the air mostly by 1,200 coal-fired power plants. Even as the debate and politically maneuvering have continued, most power generators have upgraded their coal-fired plants, using existing technology, to vastly reduce mercury emissions. Most of the plants now in question are among the oldest in the country, including several in Pennsylvania. Operators of the plants in question have contended that the rules will jeopardize the reliability of the electrical grid. But competing producers who comply with the rules already, along with the EPA and the Department of Energy, have said that no such disruption will occur. Market-related developments, which were unforeseen in 1990, also have occurred during the course of the regulatory fight. Development of technology to develop shale gas has made natural gas the growing fuel of choice for electricity production.

Many of the older plants in question might be shuttered in favor of new natural gas plants, or converted to natural gas plants. Natural gas produces less than a third of the pollutants produced by coal, and a fraction of the mercury. The rule is long overdue and a gift to public health. Every state has fish advisories due to mercury in water supplies. Power plant pollution is a culprit in the national asthma epidemic and environmental mercury is a known cause of birth defects and developmental disorders. The rule is long overdue. Whatever costs it imposes will be offset by gains in public health.

YORK DAILY RECORD

From Early Bird Red Lion residents to see major hikes in sewer, water fees Customers of Red Lion's water and sewer systems are in for a big surprise in 2012. The first utility bills of the new year will show a hike in sewer rates of 35 percent and an increase in water rates of 10 percent. The Red Lion Municipal Authority, which operates the public systems, said it is being forced to raise rates to cover the higher costs it will be charged in 2012. "The primary reason is that we must pay higher fees to transport Red Lion's sewage to the Springettsbury wastewater treatment plant, and Springettsbury is also charging us a lot more for the cost of treating that sewage," authority vice chairman Carroll "Skip" Missimer said. Springettsbury officials recently made expensive improvements to their plant to comply with new state and federal regulations aimed at reducing the discharge of nutrients into the Chesapeake Bay. To recover the costs, Springettsbury is increasing the rates it charges customers like the Red Lion authority, which in turn is passing on its share of those costs to its customers. Regarding water rates, the main reason for the increase is a loss of local business. Several large Red Lion-area companies that were significant water users have closed, thus reducing the authority's revenue from water sales to those businesses. "Because most of our costs are fixed, we must spread that lost revenue among the remaining customers," Missimer said.

YORK DISPATCH

From Early Bird Susquehanna Greenway creates 95-mile driving tour Susquehanna Greenway Partnership has developed a new 95-mile driving tour featuring towns and scenic views along the Susquehanna River corridor in Pennsylvania. "The Susquehanna River is very important river, a fabulous natural resource," said Erin Pierce, the partnership's watershed development director. "It is the largest contributor of fresh water into the Chesapeake Bay." The historic, economic and geographical information about the 22 sites featured on the tour will be provided through a guide booklet and audio narration, she said. Tour sites include parks, trails and historical structures along the Susquehanna greenway middle region, including Danville in Montour County; Selinsgrove, Snyder County; and Watsontown, Northumberland County.

Follow along: To take the tour, people must download and print out the booklet from Susquehanna Greenway Partnership's website at www.susquehannagreenway.org. The driving tour audio can be downloaded onto an MP3 player or accessed by a smartphone that can scan a QR code available on the website. "We hope people will enjoy it and linger at the stops they want to explore and learn about the cultural and natural history of the Susquehanna Valley River," Pierce said. "The tour takes 2 1/2 hours just of driving. You can use a weekend or a full day to devote to the driving tour." The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership -- based in Lewisburg, Union County -- has been working on the driving tour project for about a year with the goal of increasing public interest in the Susquehanna River, Pierce said. The partnership also received suggestions from local residents to determine which sites to make part of the tour.

JOHNSTOWN TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

From Early Bird 258-mile pipeline in Pa., W.Va. proposed JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — A Texas company is maneuvering to construct a pipeline to carry Marcellus Shale natural gas across Pennsylvania. The Atlantic Access Project, a proposed 258-mile pipeline using 36-inch pipe, would move fuel from the rich Marcellus gas fields of western Pennsylvania and the panhandle of West Virginia to eastern gas-hungry markets. "We are early — early in this process," Christopher Stockton, a spokesman for Houston-based Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., said last week. The company filed a pre-application, amounting to a request for a review of project plans, with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. "It's a big project," Stockton said. "It will require a lot of input from a lot of people, agencies and organizations." The project could cost \$1 billion, according to information from U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster. He is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. Stockton said the company, commonly referred to as Transco, is owned by The Williams Co. Inc. and there is not a final figure on the project's estimated cost. "It will easily be in excess of \$1 billion," he said. When the pipeline is completed, it would carry 1,350,000 dekatherms of natural gas per day, or enough energy to provide winter heat for 1,350,000 homes for one day, according to calculations by Penn State's Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research. Documents recently filed with the Federal ..

By FRED KRUPP — Environmental Defense Fund

FRED KRUPP — Environmental Defense Fund

Read more here: <http://www.centredaily.com/2011/12/27/3032343/a-huge-and-long-overdue-win-for.html#storylink=cpy>

CENTRE DAILY TIMES

A huge and long overdue win for public health

Commentary: By FRED KRUPP — Environmental Defense Fund. It is one of the most important public health measures in a generation, one that will save tens of thousands of American lives. It will protect the IQ of countless American kids, and help clear the air for the millions of Americans with asthma. It may be the biggest health story you've never heard of. I'm referring to the ruling the Obama administration unveiled Dec. 21 to control toxic mercury pollution from coal-burning power plants. These rules have been 21 years in the making, and now, at long last, they will bring Americans some relief from a pervasive toxin.

Fracking fluid spilled onto roadway in Pa. crash SALLADASBURG, Pa. — State police in central Pennsylvania say an unknown amount of the fluid used in natural gas drilling spilled onto a roadway and into a creek after a collision involving two tractor-trailers. The Williamsport Sun-Gazette reports (<http://bit.ly/tODEII>) one truck rear-ended the other on Route 287 early Monday afternoon in Mifflin Township, shutting down the roadway for several hours. Police say the second truck was pushed through a stop sign and down an embankment. The truck overturned and was leaking fracking fluid, which is used in a type of natural gas drilling known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking."

Consultant says sewer line work will cost \$5.4 million Authority must replace two miles of sanitary line The total cost of changes outlined in the Altoona Water Authority's corrective-action plan for sanitary sewer overflows in the Pleasant Valley area will be \$5.4 million, the authority's consulting engineer said. The biggest part of the work is the \$4.6 million replacement of two miles of sanitary sewer line between HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital and Beckman Drive off Ruskin Drive, Mark Glenn of Gwin Dobson & Foreman said. ... The authority unexpectedly received a \$10 million grant from Pennvest and a \$2.68 million grant from the H2O PA program for the work, which will enable the authority to avoid spending bond money borrowed for the project. The authority is doing the work under pressure from DEP, which began talking with the authority about the need for the work after receiving mandated reports on sewer overflows, which require workers to pump flooded manholes, Glenn said. "They came back and said to fix it," he said.

DELAWARE COUNTY DAILY TIMES

Guest Column: Why the pols strike out at refinery issue Part 1 of a series on saving refinery jobs and getting America working again. For the tens of thousands whose livelihoods depend on the Sunoco and ConocoPhillips oil refineries in Philadelphia, Marcus Hook and Trainer, the Grinch arrived early this Christmas, announcing that all three facilities would be closing in the near future. But unlike the Grinch who delighted in causing misery for the sake of misery, the oil companies seemed to have no choice. Their hand was forced by a combination of market forces that saw them losing millions every single day. ... But here's the good news. There is hope, more than can be imagined. Those refinery workers could not be sitting on a better spot on Earth to reap the rewards of a massive opportunity — the correct utilization of the Marcellus Shale natural gas bonanza. If the politicians do their most important job — and the only one they should be doing — of cutting bureaucratic red tape and slashing stifling regulations, the free market will take hold, creating jobs and wealth of unprecedented proportions.... Now the big questions loom — can the refineries be saved, will a buyer be found, can they be converted to refine natural gas, and, of course, what will be the fate of the thousands of families whose livelihoods depend on the refineries? ... -- Chris Freind is an independent columnist, television/radio commentator, and investigative reporter who operates his own news bureau.

Four municipalities ink Climate Change Action Plan

RUTLEDGE — Representatives of Rose Valley, Rutledge, Swarthmore and Nether Providence gathered at the borough hall recently to sign a joint resolution to implement a Climate Change Action Plan. The goal of the plan is to reduce energy use in each of the four municipalities by 20 percent by 2020. The plan includes actions to be taken by municipal government operations, businesses, residences and schools. Components include a wide range of ideas, such as replacing municipal government vehicles with hybrids and smaller vehicles, making municipal buildings more energy efficient, replacing street lights with energy efficient LED lamps and expanding existing tree planting programs. "This is the first time that all four of our communities are here together," said Bonnie Smith, a member of the Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Committee. Smith noted that the multimunicipal plan adopted about 15 years ago recommended the action plan. "I am happy to reaffirm Nether Providence's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and working with our neighbors to solve those problems, which we cannot solve alone," said Nate Much, president of the Nether Providence Board of Commissioners.

SALLADASBURG, Pa. — State police in central Pennsylvania say an unknown amount of the fluid used in natural gas drilling spilled onto a roadway and into a creek after a collision involving two tractor-trailers. The Williamsport Sun-Gazette reports (<http://bit.ly/tODEII>) one truck rear-ended the other on Route 287 early Monday afternoon in Mifflin Township, shutting down the roadway for several hours. Police say the second truck was pushed through a stop sign and down an embankment. The truck overturned and was leaking fracking fluid, which is used in a type of natural gas drilling known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking." Environmentalists and other critics worry fracking, which involves blasting the chemical-laced water into the ground, could poison water supplies. But the natural gas industry says it's been used safely for decades.

Read more here: <http://www.centredaily.com/2011/12/27/3032301/fracking-fluid-spilled-onto-roadway.html#storylink=cpy>

POTTSTOWNPATCH

'Small Landscapes Can Make A Positive Difference' From Montgomery County's Penn State Cooperative Extension Office: Pennsylvania's vast forests have always supported an abundance and variety of wildlife. Although a majority of Pennsylvania's woodland owners now own less than 10 acres, these small landscapes can make a positive difference for the state's wildlife. By enhancing your existing woods or creating natural areas on your land, you can attract and support wildlife and reduce your energy costs, cleaning our water and filtering our air. Penn State Extension along with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and DCNR Bureau of Forestry are sponsoring the *Wildlife in Your Backyard Woods* workshop to be held in southeast Pennsylvania this winter.

POTTSVILLE REPUBLICAN & HERALD

Editorial: Cleaner air gift for future There will be a lot less coal in stockings - and lungs - on future Christmases due to a new rule adopted last week by the Environmental Protection Agency after a 21-year battle. Despite abundant evidence of the harm caused to humans and wildlife by highly toxic mercury, the debate over the regulations to reduce its emission by power plants has raged since EPA was authorized to address mercury by 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act. Finally, the EPA issued rules last week to reduce by 91 percent the amount of mercury - more than 33 tons a year - still pumped into the air mostly by 1,200 coal-fired power plants. Even as the debate and politically maneuvering have continued, most power generators have upgraded their coal-fired plants, using existing technology, to vastly reduce mercury emissions. Most of the plants now in question are among the oldest in the country, including several in Pennsylvania. Operators of the plants in question have contended that the rules will jeopardize the reliability of the electrical grid. But competing producers who comply with the rules already, along with the EPA and the Department of Energy, have said that no such disruption will occur .

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

From Early Bird Coal extraction poses climate challenge for Obama administration (Sunday) When it comes to coal mining in the United States, environmentalists have a simple goal: End it. For the Obama administration, it's a little more complicated. Since taking office

nearly three years ago, the administration has restricted coal-mining waste from being dumped into streams and imposed new pollution controls on coal-fired power plants. But on the fundamental question of whether the government should halt federal leasing, the administration's answer has been: not yet. Instead, the federal government is analyzing the environmental impact of extracting coal from public land, drawing fire from both sides. Environmentalists say such action doesn't go far enough, while industry officials question why it would pursue this analysis in the absence of a federal law on greenhouse gas emissions. "On some level, the twin goals of increased fossil fuel production and reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are necessarily in conflict, at least without a national cap on emissions," said Paul Bledsoe, who was a special assistant at the Interior Department during the Clinton administration. "This fundamental contradiction in current U.S. energy policy is playing out on the Keystone oil pipeline, in our public lands policy and throughout the energy economy." Interior Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes said the agency is "committed to evaluating greenhouse gas emissions among the many important factors we analyze when considering whether or not a coal extraction lease sale makes sense for the environment, the economy and America's energy security."

From Early Bird Blog: 2011 in energy and *environmental* policy After Republicans took control of the House in the 2010 midterms, many observers predicted that it would be a fairly quiet year on the energy and environmental fronts. After all, the odds of a big cap-and-trade bill making it through House Speaker John Boehner's caucus were zero. The two parties no longer even agreed on whether climate change is real. What could Congress possibly accomplish? And yet, as it turned out, 2011 was a remarkably hectic year in environmental news. It's just that most of the biggest stories had nothing to do with Congress. The White House finished up a number of big energy-related regulations; the world kept tossing up surprises — from natural disasters to oil disruptions; and greens started battling oil and gas producers at the local level across the country. Here were the five biggest environmental and energy storylines of 2011:

From Early Bird Letter: A grim future without sound planning Reporter Darryl Fears did an excellent job of describing the havoc wrought by self-styled Tea Party activists in Virginia ["Climate-change fight intensifies in Virginia," news story, Dec. 18] as they oppose the civic planning that has been part of U.S. society since well before Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase. Their disruptive tactics deny citizens their rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, revealing the activists' interest in themselves rather than our Constitution. These attacks can impose real costs and can have tragic consequences for the communities they say they are trying to protect. Good planning is vital to dealing with challenges such as the combination of land subsidence and rising sea levels in Hampton Roads. In every state across the country, engaging citizens through local planning is essential to rebuilding local economies, creating jobs and improving people's lives

WASHINGTON TIMES

From Early Bird Virginia budget omits funds for Potomac River (Dec. 26) Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell's two-year, \$85 billion budget blueprint does not include thousands in dues to a long-standing, multistate compact to clean and maintain the Potomac River, a move drawing fire from critics who say the relatively small outlay provides a substantial return for the commonwealth. The \$151,500 in dues to the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin for the current year was stripped out during the 2011 General Assembly's budget amendment

process. Mr. McDonnell, a Republican, did not include the money for either of the next two years. The commission is a 71-year-old pact among the District, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the federal government to preserve and maintain the river and its tributaries. In an Oct. 27 letter, Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Doug Domenech said the commission's work often overlaps with other services, including a multistate commission devoted to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. The membership fee is also expensive compared to other interstate organizations, Mr. Domenech wrote, and represents the equivalent cost for two full-time state employees who could working on other water-quality projects. "In these economic times, we are dedicated to spending limited taxpayer dollars in the most effective and efficient way possible," Mr. Domenech stated. "Virginia's membership in the ICPRB is no longer needed to provide quality management of the state's interest in the river basin."

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER

Honeywell Wins State Department ESPCs The U.S. Department of State has awarded Honeywell an energy savings performance contract for a project at two of its facilities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The project will implement energy efficiency and water conservation measures at the Harry S. Truman Building in Washington, D.C., which serves as the agency's headquarters (pictured), and at the Beltsville Information Management Center in Beltsville, Md., the U.S. Department of Energy has announced. Under the contract, Honeywell will install energy efficient equipment that will that save more than 25 billion Btu per year—enough to power more than 260 homes for a year—and generate energy, water, and operations and maintenance cost savings of more than \$700,000 in the first year alone, the Energy Department said.

GANT DAILY

PSU Faculty Member Captures "Faces" of Marcellus Shale A faculty member in the College of Communications has produced a photo essay about people impacted by a controversial and timely matter in Pennsylvania. John Beale, a senior lecturer and former chief photographer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, captured "Faces of The Marcellus Shale" for the Winter 2012 edition of Pittsburgh Quarterly magazine. In the past several years, ancient organic matter trapped more than a mile beneath the surface of the Earth has changed life in western Pennsylvania. Vast deposits of natural gas deep in rock, known collectively as Marcellus Shale, have brought many changes. They include an economic boom to many (from landowners to supporting businesses), emotional debates about environmental impact for others and obvious challenges in terms of infrastructure throughout the region. Beale, who teaches introductory and advanced courses in photojournalism, focused on nearly two dozen stakeholders for the photo essay — everyone from gas company employees and opponents of natural gas drilling to activists, politicians, researchers and residents of communities who operate or work at local businesses that have been impacted by the uptick in business as a result of drilling. "We're proud to have John in the classroom sharing his expertise with students, and we're also proud of the work he does with projects like this when he has the time," said Ford Risley, head of the Department of Journalism. "His work provides a model, something to which students can aspire, and it's a testament to the talent of the people we have teaching. We have many faculty members who participate in such 'professional scholarship' and that's good for our program."

WFMZ-TV 69 NEWS

E. coli found in area well water Some residents in Lynn Township, Lehigh County, plan to take

action Tuesday night about a problem they say is contaminating their wells. Neighbors on Broadtail Court in New Tripoli say they're going to a township meeting Tuesday evening because their water has tested positive for E.coli and they blame a nearby farm. Bill Schaffhouser, who has lived there for six years, says the farm is using human feces to fertilize its crops. He's now urging neighbors to also attend the meeting with him "Anybody that lives near this development on Broadtail Court should have their water tested and they should go to that meeting," said Schaffhouser. Recently, he was having a new water system installed and the installer found something alarming. Schaffhouser explained, "He had tested some water on the back streets over there and came up with E-coli and the gentleman had told us that they were putting this human feces on the fields behind us." The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection said permission was given to the farm in question to use bio-solids called granulate, which is sewage water broken down into pellets. The farmer told 69 News that the pellets do contain about 30-percent human feces. "All our wells are coming up with E. coli. Where else could it be coming from?" said Schaffhouser. He says if he knew this was allowed on the farm next to him, he never would have built a house there. Schaffhouser said the issue will be addressed at a Lynn Township meeting 6:30 Tuesday night at 7911 Kings Highway in New Tripoli.

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

From Early Bird NCCo upgrades online maps The county has added more detailed maps to its website of proposed changes to the 2012 Comprehensive Development Plan update, but some residents and a council member say its not enough to inform people about the new plan. Earlier this month, Councilman Bob Weiner and a few civic leaders asked the county to provide online maps that would allow residents to see what potential changes could be in store for their own neighborhoods. At the time, the maps that accompanied the text of the plan were so small that specific neighborhoods couldn't be detected. The maps, which have been changed for a second time, remain a problem, critics say. Even though they can zoom to a street level, they arrived on the website late in the process, are hard to find and are difficult to navigate. "This is what was asked for, and we put it up," county Land Use General Manger David Culver said. "If this makes somebody more comfortable, then it's there." The Comprehensive Development Plan will guide the county government's land-use decisions during the next 10 years. It was last updated in 2007. Culver said he thinks the public has enough information to be able to comment on the plan at the Jan. 3 public hearing before the county Planning Board and Land Use Department.

Talking points

EPA OKs limit to emissions from certain power plants. The Environmental Protection Agency recently set standards for the first time to limit toxic air pollutants emitted from coal- and oil-fired power plants. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Clean Air, said these emissions, which include mercury and arsenic, are a public health threat that can affect child brain development and cause cancer. The EPA believes these standards are "long overdue," particularly since the agency determined it was scientifically and legally "appropriate

and necessary" to control emissions in 2000, following years of study. Technology to control air pollution already exists, and plants will have up to four years to comply with the new Mercury and Air Toxics Standards.

A spokesperson from Carper's office said that because Delaware's air quality is affected by the power plants from surrounding states, Delaware already has begun to invest in reducing the toxic air pollutants from its plants.

CAPE GAZETTE

From Early Bird Public examines Gordons Pond Trail plans More than 45 people took an up-close look at detailed plans for a proposed pathway and improved trail linking Gordons Pond and Herring Point in Cape Henlopen State Park. The Gordons Pond Trail project is a key project in Gov. Jack Markell's First State Trails and Pathways Plan. When completed, the trail will complete a 15.5-mile loop through Lewes and Rehoboth Beach that includes the Junction and Breakwater Trail in the western section of the park. The forum, hosted by Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and Division of Parks & Recreation, took place Dec. 15 at the Lewes Public Library. Visitors now have use an 8-foot-wide, .7-mile, crushed stone trail ending at an observation platform overlooking Gordons Pond, and a 1.1-mile undeveloped trail to Herring Point. By improving the 1.1-mile segment, officials hope to protect rare plant and animal species as well as archaeological sites from wayward hikers and bikers who wander onto sensitive areas as they try to use the primitive and mostly unmarked trail. "We're pretty confident that what we've come up with will have the least impact on the marsh, habitat, piping plover and dunes," said Lee Ann Walling, DNREC chief of planning. Walling said the original plan called for the trail to cut through marshland. "We had some negative reaction to that and looked for alternatives," she said. A team of DNREC experts chose the trail's pathway after several field trips and extensive data review. The trail also avoids areas where the dune is likely to shift or move, which could require excessive trail maintenance.

WDEL RADIO

From Early Bird More pollution from Del. City refinery The recently restarted Delaware City oil refinery continues to have operating problems. The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control reports 450 pounds of sulfur dioxide were released into the air from the refinery's flare just before eight o'clock Saturday morning. The chemical is considered to be hazardous by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The release continued for about seven minutes. The refinery's owner, PBF, announced earlier this week that they're planning to invest in a \$1 billion expansion at the refinery, which they believe will drastically cut emissions. Since re-opening the refinery in October, the facility has been cited several times for pollution violations.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

From Early Bird DEP gearing up for new Marcellus responsibilities CHARLESTON, W.Va.

-- West Virginia regulators are gearing up to implement the state's new law governing natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, but a key piece of the legislation might take some time to get in place. Randy Huffman, secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection, worries it could take a year or more for his agency to fill 14 new positions in its Office of Oil and Gas. "I'd be ecstatic if we could get them on board in 12 months," Huffman said. "That would be a gift." The new drilling legislation increases industry permit fees to provide DEP with an estimated \$2.4 million a year to cover an ongoing deficit at the agency's oil and gas division and to hire new staff for that office. Huffman said he's already advertised to try to fill five vacant positions and hoped to move quickly to do so for nine new inspectors and five technical and administrative staff funded by the permit fees. But the boom in the natural gas industry, Huffman said, it's hard for DEP to compete with private sector jobs that can be two or three times as much. Currently, state oil and gas inspectors make an average of \$32,000 a year and their supervisors an average of \$38,000, Huffman said. The legislation sets a minimum inspector's salary of \$35,000 a year and a floor for oil and gas supervising staff of \$40,000 annually. Huffman said the legislation does help his agency pull from a larger pool of candidates, by reducing from six years to two years the amount of gas industry experience candidates must have to be hired as DEP inspectors.

CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL

From Early Bird Editorial: A Christmas present from the U.S. EPA The latest swipe at coal-fired power will cost both jobs and ratepayers. Americans hoping for a faster rate of economic growth and jobs got a nasty present this week from the Obama administration. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued what may be the most expensive rule it has ever issued. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson heralded this regulatory achievement as "historic" and "a great victory. For whom? The EPA says its new rule will cost \$9.6 billion, which the Wall Street Journal called "a gross, deliberate underestimate." The new regulation will score a direct hit on the coal industry. It will cost coal-fired utilities billions. It will force business and residential customers to pay even higher bills. It will compromise the reliability of the electric power grid. And it will cost jobs. The agency thinks the rule will prevent 11,000 premature deaths and 4,700 heart attacks a year by 2016. The standards are aimed at forcing coal-fired power plants to reduce mercury pollution by 90 percent, acid gases by 88 percent, and sulfur dioxide by 41 percent - in only four years. A compressed schedule could force some utilities into what the Journal called "a de facto EPA receivership and expose them to lawsuits and other liabilities." Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., have co-sponsored a bill that would at least extend the time frame for compliance by two years. If that is not done, Manchin warns, "the short-term consequences for the economy would be devastating."

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER

From Early Bird EPA Rule May Cause Blackouts WHEELING - The leader of a think tank on energy policy sees electrical blackouts in America's future if the Environmental Protection Agency continues plans to phase out coal-fired electric plants. Thomas Borelli, director of the Free Enterprise Project at the National Center for Public Policy Research, also believes there could be backlash in the 2012 elections if voters find themselves without electricity in the coming months. New EPA rules were issued last week and will allow companies three years to comply. These will further limit mercury emissions under the Clean Air Act, set new limits on the emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides and establish new coal-ash disposal rules. More than half of America's energy supply - and all electricity generated locally - is produced by

burning coal. Many utility companies with coal-fired plants have indicated they can't afford to comply with the rules and will instead close some of their facilities. Among those expected to close by the end of 2014 is the Kammer Plant in Marshall County, operated by American Electric Power. "There are an amazing number of utility companies, grid operators and even state regulatory officials who are waving the white flag," Borelli said. "They say if the EPA is allowed to proceed with these regulations, there could be electricity shortages - brownouts and blackouts across the nation. "Despite the warning, the Obama administration refuses to do in-depth study. ... People are saying there's a problem, and it's just being ignored," he added.

From Early Bird Monitor Landfill Odor Problem When Ohio Environmental Protection Agency officials revealed late last week they had reached an agreement with the Apex Landfill, it apparently headed off a Jefferson County action that could have closed the facility down on Jan. 1. County officials were right to issue the ultimatum they did, however. County Board of Health members agreed last week that unless the OEPA reported at least some progress in eliminating odor problems at the landfill, the board would refuse to grant an operating license for the facility in 2012.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL

From Early Bird No. 6: West Virginia still dogged by EPA regulation in 2011 "EPA overreach" became a Republican buzzword in 2011. And as lawmakers tried to make their case that the Environmental Protection Agency's "war on coal" was killing jobs, it became clear that coal mining employment is on the rise. In 2009, the EPA withheld 79 surface mining permits in Appalachia for extra environmental review. In 2010, it began using a difficult-to-meet water quality standard for conductivity below Appalachian coal mines. And in January 2011, it took the extraordinary step of rescinding the permit for Arch Coal Co.'s large Spruce Fork No. 1 surface mine in Logan County for environmental reasons. With that, the newly Republican-controlled House of Representatives got busy. A raft of bills introduced in the House this year aimed to limit EPA authority. Several were introduced by or co-sponsored by the state's Republican representatives, Shelley Moore Capito and David McKinley; a few drew support from Democrat Nick Rahall as well. Their sheer scope and number — 17 by one count — gives the impression of a counter "war on EPA." Among them:

Mediation under way in Charleston for massive Monsanto class action lawsuit CHARLESTON -Plaintiffs in two related lawsuits against Monsanto Co. gathered Dec. 27 at the Charleston Marriott Town Center to negotiate a possible settlement in a massive class action lawsuit that alleges the company exposed people to toxins. Stuart Calwell, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said he is hopeful he and attorneys representing the chemical company can reach a settlement this afternoon. The attorneys are working on the agreement with two circuit court judges who were assigned to the massive case. Calwell and the others are negotiating a settlement for 127 plaintiffs who claim they were exposed to dioxin released into the air and water by a Monsanto-owned plant in Nitro. Plaintiffs filed the suit in 2004 against Monsanto, Pharmacia Corp., Akzo Nobel Chemicals Inc., Akzo Chemicals Inc., Flexsys America Co., Flexsys America LP, Flexsys International LP and Flexsys International Co., seeking medical monitoring. Plaintiffs claim from 1948 to 1969, Monsanto manufactured herbicides at its Nitro chemical plant, which created dioxin as a byproduct. According to the suit, this toxic byproduct was released into the air at the

old Monsanto plant from burning waste materials. One lawsuit, which Calwell called the "Allen case" was filed several years ago. Another case, the "Carter case" was filed last year. Both cases ask for medical monitoring expenses as well as property damages caused by the dioxin contamination.

WEST VIRGINIA METRO NEWS

From Early Bird No Problems Anticipated The new rules governing the drilling of Marcellus shale gas deposits in West Virginia cover a wide range of issues. Among the stipulations for companies wanting to drill is a requirement to maintain the public roads they use leading to the well sites. "A lot of the roads they're drilling on are what we refer to as our secondary road system," said state Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox. "They're county routes, they're narrow, they weren't built for these heavy trucks that utilize these roads to gain access to their well sites." Those heavy trucks can rapidly destroy a secondary route often used by only a handful of residents and a school bus or two. The new Horizontal Drilling law requires companies to enter into negotiated agreements with the DOH to widen and maintain the roads before and during the drilling process. The law isn't a big shift for the drillers however; the legislation only codifies a standing practice which has been in place between DOH and the industry for several months. "They have been, particularly the larger companies have been very good to work with," said Mattox. "There's been some problems in the past, but that seems to have been taken care of since we implemented this policy a few months back." Mattox is confident with the policy now cemented into law the gas companies will leave rural roads in better shape now than when they arrived and will maintain them adequately during the drilling process

From Early Bird New Program Trains Drill Workers Those looking to get into the booming Marcellus shale natural gas industry in West Virginia can now get some basic drilling rig training through a new program from the West Virginia Wood Technology Center and Pierpont Community and Technical College. "We are trying to qualify workers in West Virginia to take advantage of the Marcellus shale," Wood Technology Center Executive Director Robbie Morris said of the effort. The oil and gas training course, called RigPass Certification, is four days of intensive training that includes extensive safety training specific to the drilling industry while offering participants exposure to a drilling rig and the environment it operates in using a simulator that's located in Buckhannon. "A lot of people are coming from the wood industry or other distressed industries and they have no idea what a drill rig looks like. They have no idea what the oil and gas industry is all about, they just hear 'Marcellus shale' in the news and everywhere else," Morris says. "This is intended to get them familiar with the industry, familiar with the terminology, familiar with the operations of it." Those who are part of the course must pass a drug test before the training even starts. Morris says that comes at the beginning of the process for a reason.

From Early Bird Hoppy's Commentary for Monday Cecil Roberts has a problem. In 2008, the United Mine Workers of America president hardly supported Barak Obama's candidacy. Obama backed the card-check system that made it easier for unions to recruit new members and Roberts believed Obama was more concerned about mine safety than any Republican. Additionally, Roberts likes Obama personally, and he's welcome at the White House. If only it were that simple, Roberts could easily join with other labor leaders again in 2012 to try to help deliver another four years for Obama. But the long-time union leader has been put in a political

bind by Lisa Jackson, Obama's activist Environmental Protection Agency administrator. Last week, Jackson announced new national standards limiting emissions from coal-fired power plants. The rules will force older power plants to shut down, while utilities will have to rush to bring others into compliance within three years. The *Wall Street Journal* said, "The rule may be the most expensive the agency has ever issued, and it represents the triumph of the Obama Administration's green agenda over economic growth and job creation." Some of the workers employed at power plants that will shut down are members of Roberts' own union, leaving him in the awkward position of trying to explain how this Administration is good for the UMW.

Commerce Secretary: Cracker Decisions Coming Soon The state's Commerce Secretary says site decisions for two ethane cracker facilities could be made within a matter of weeks. At least two companies are reportedly considering several locations in West Virginia for the plants that would use byproducts from natural gas drilling. "I think the odds of us getting a cracker, I believe, are better than 50/50," Keith Burdette, who also serves as Executive Director for the West Virginia Development Office, said on Tuesday's MetroNews Talkline. Shell officials are expected to make a site announcement within the next 30 days. The company has narrowed down a list of 40 possible cracker locations to just a few in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Officials with another company, one Burdette will not publicly identify at this point, is reportedly looking at several locations in the Mountain State as well and could have a decision sometime during the next two to three weeks.

BECKLEY REGISTER HERALD

From Early Bird Beards Fork community fears logging is first step toward being surrounded by surface mines BEARDS FORK — A small, isolated community in Fayette County is seeing the first clear signs of the surface mine operations that may one day nearly surround it. Loggers moved in to Beards Fork last week, felling trees on a hillside abutting the back yards of residents and lifting logs out of the mountains by helicopter. "Beards Fork has always been a quiet, close-knit community with a sense of ownership of this area," says local resident Artie Mullins. "We know we don't own the mountains, but this just seems invasive. We're not used to it." Advantage Timberland out of Bluefield manages the timber rights on the property — owned by Pocahontas Land Co. — for Appalachian Forest LLC. Advantage Timberland President Terry Owen says with the planned surface mining, the trees will be bulldozed in mining operations if not harvested soon. "We're forced to do this timber harvesting now because of the surface mining going in," he says. "We have to cut wood ahead of the surface mine so we don't lose value that the landowner has in purchasing the timber rights." According to Owen, the company is logging the spots of forest land that won't be reachable once mining operations begin. It must be done in winter when the leaves are down, for safety reasons, he says. The area won't see another round of logging for 50 years, he estimates, "however long it takes for a surface mine to recover." The selective logging behind Kathryn South's house happened suddenly and was over in a day. She says logs rolled down into the flower bushes in her backyard. South moved back to the area in 2004 and worries about flooding and mudslides, which neighbors say were a problem the last time the mountain was logged. "Right when I think I'll be able to have a decent house, it's going to be washed out from under me," she says.

From Early Bird Legislators say new *Marcellus* law may need to be updated CHARLESTON — Historic Marcellus shale gas legislation, now a part of the State Code, pleased the vast majority of West Virginia lawmakers, but even those hailing its passage admit some changes might be necessary as the fledgling industry moves forward. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin affixed his signature to it late in the week, the final step in a process that actually began three years ago. “I think we addressed all parts in the bill, in one form or another, probably not as strongly as some would like,” says Sen. Orphy Klempa, D-Ohio, who served on the 10-member select committee appointed after the original Senate measure collapsed on the final day of the session last March. “At the end of the day, I think we got a good piece of legislation.” As rapid technology changes occur in the industry, however, Klempa acknowledged the Legislature might be compelled to make changes in the law. Named to the panel since his district embraces a good deal of horizontal gas drilling, Klempa says one area of concern might be the 625-foot buffer zone separating operations from dwellings occupied by humans and certain farm animals. “I want to know what the light does to those folks living in the dust and fumes and everything they have to deal with at 625 feet,” he said.

From Early Bird Agency finds mine blast in compliance (Sunday) An investigation by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) into a recent blast from a surface mine in Fayette County states that the explosion was in compliance with state law. The 356 pounds of explosives used in the blast are well below the 2,521 pounds allowed under regulations, the report states. The amount allowed depends on the distance from the blasting to any nearby structures. In this case, the closest structure was 2,762 feet. Due to the size of the blast and the distance to the complainant, the report says “it would have been air overpressure that was felt ... It is possible under certain atmospheric conditions to experience air overpressure at these distances.” Concussion waves or “air blasts” are pulses of air that come from the shock of the explosion. The wave can travel great distances, especially on cloudy days, bouncing off cloud cover and shaking houses below. Mary Rahall says she and dozens of her neighbors on Maple Avenue in the historic district of Fayetteville have felt and discussed the blasts this year. “Many people in my neighborhood complain all the time about the blasting,” she says. “These blasts vibrate windows and floors and make you feel like an earthquake is happening under your feet. “I don’t want to see anyone lose their job, but I don’t like that the coal companies are profiting by stripping our beautiful mountains and causing settlement damage to several homes and historic buildings in our community.”

From Early Bird Gas pipeline will run from Nicholas to Braxton counties An executive at Bluescape Resources confirms that work is under way on a 52-mile pipeline that would transport gas from the Marcellus shale fields of Nicholas County to a connection point near Frametown in Braxton County. “We have acquired all of the right of way, the permits and the interconnect agreement with the transmission company we plan to connect our pipeline with,” says Tom Grace, Bluescape’s executive vice president. “We initiated the construction operations earlier this year.” The pipeline will cost over \$100 million and cross the Gauley and Elk rivers on its way to the company’s wells near Richwood, says Grace. He says no specific timeline for completion of the project is set. “We are in the very early stages of proving the economic viability of this resource. It is a multi-year project, but if successful, this will open up an entire region of the state that before now has little economic development in terms of oil and gas,” he says. The Dallas-based company currently has at least eight horizontal well permits in Nicholas

County, approved by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP). Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. and Triana Engineering are also drilling wells to tap Marcellus shale gas in the county. Three of Bluescape's Nicholas County wells have flared illegally since the end of August, from a single flare stack. The DEP issued a notice of violation in late October to the company for not obtaining a permit. Law states that temporary flares can only burn for 30 days per year. A response to the WVDEP's notice of violation says that Bluescape has no choice but to burn the gas, since "to date no natural gas pipelines have been installed on or in the vicinity of the site." The letter also states that two WVDEP officials told the company no permits were needed for the flare.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

From Early Bird DEP finds Fayette mine blast in compliance FAYETTEVILLE, W.Va. --An investigation by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection into a recent blast from a surface mine in Fayette County says the explosion was in compliance with state law. The report states that the 356 pounds of explosives used in the blast are well below the 2,521 pounds allowed under regulations. The amount allowed depends on the distance from the blasting to any nearby structures. The Register-Herald reports that according to the report air blasts from the shock of the explosion can travel great distances and shake houses. Mary Rahall says she and her neighbors in the historic district of Fayetteville have felt the blasts. She told the newspaper that the blasts are not only stripping mountains but causing damage to homes and historic buildings.

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER

TOP OF 2011: Marcellus and Utica Shales Go Prime Time WHEELING - As 2011 began, West Virginia and Ohio stood on the brink of a natural gas drilling boom with companies such as Chesapeake Energy and Marquette Exploration staking major claims in both states. With the year drawing to a close, Oklahoma City-based Chesapeake continues as the Upper Ohio Valley's largest individual player. However, with New York City-based Hess Corp. acquiring Marquette during the year - and global oil giants Chevron and Exxon Mobil entering the shale game in both states - the region seems poised to become an even larger player as the United States searches for energy independence. Throughout the year, gas abstractors working on behalf of drilling companies flooded county offices in search of properties that drillers could lease. Deed offices in West Virginia and Ohio often became so crowded that tables had to be set up for abstractors to work in the hallways. In 2010, a common lease throughout the area may have seen a property owner signing to gain \$750 per acre and 14 percent production royalties for their land. Now, offers at least as high as \$5,200 per acre with as much as 20 percent of the production royalties are commonplace. For those who own property but have yet to sign a lease, the price companies will offer them is hard to predict because of market conditions.

POINT PLEASANT REGISTER

Rahall, Manchin, AEP respond to EPA standards WEST VIRGINIA — U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.), U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), and AEP have recently issued statements regarding the EPA's new standards for coal-fired power plants. On Wednesday Dec. 21, Lisa Jackson, EPA administrator, reported that these new standards would require coal-fired power plants to reduce toxic emissions. She also stated these new standards would create many new

jobs, some temporary construction jobs, and some long-term jobs to operate and maintain the new upgrades. "I have serious concerns about the new Clean Air rules being issued by EPA," Rahall said. "In fact, I have voted in Congress to prevent their implementation in the near term. The rules are likely to drive up energy prices for American consumers and result in the loss of jobs for coal miners while doing nothing to address the growth in global emissions. It certainly makes more sense to me to be investing in American-made technologies to help American utilities upgrade to more efficient, cleaner ways of using domestic coal, rather than putting the rule-making hammer to American plants and forcing our coal to be shipped overseas where emissions will be even greater. From the standpoint for sufficiency of our energy supply and protection of our global atmosphere, we ought to be looking creatively at coal power, rather than instituting policies that force coal out of our energy sector."

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

From Early Bird Residents worried about safety of landfill gas energy project Howard County officials say they will likely spend up to \$50,000 on emissions testing for a new generator that will produce energy from methane gas given off by Alpha Ridge Landfill, after neighbors raised concerns over how the project might affect air quality. The decision last week came after an informational meeting held in Marriottsville by the department of public works, which is overseeing the proposed combustion engine. "If they can't prove to me it's safe, then don't tell me it's safe," said one resident, Geff Ottman, during Monday's meeting at Marriotts Ridge High School. Ottman said he and other residents are concerned about the long-term safety and health of the community, which the county connected to public water in the late 1990s after the groundwater supply was polluted by the landfill. "We believe it's a good project," said Evelyn Tomlin, chief of the county's bureau of environmental services, following the meeting. But she added, "We're listening to their concerns." She said the county plans additional emissions testing after hearing from residents at the meeting. The county still expects to begin operating the system this summer. Energy will be captured from the existing landfill flare system that was installed in 1999 to contain odors and prevent methane from escaping. County officials said the electricity from the project will be used to power the new generator, the existing gas collection and flare system, as well as a new vehicle charging station, while the rest will be sold, offsetting some of the landfill's costs. The county did not plan for long-term testing of the emissions from the generator because Environmental Protection Agency standards and the scientist hired by the county said the chemical emissions released by the generator are not considered to be harmful. "The impacts are really not going to hurt anybody," said Laura C. Green, a senior scientist and president of Cambridge Environmental Inc., who was hired by the county to study the project. She said the kinds of chemical emissions and the amounts released from the landfill are considered to be unchanging because that landfill cell is no longer taking in waste. Compared with figures from other landfills, potentially dangerous chemicals emitted from Howard's landfill are much lower than EPA standards and would not increase with a generator.

From Early Bird City, suburban residents try fish farming The aquarium in the living room of Meir and Leah Lazar's Baltimore County home isn't just for decoration. The tilapia and bluegills packed into the 50-gallon glass tank are waiting their turn to wind up on dinner plates. Out back, Meir Lazar is putting the finishing touches on a bigger new home for the fish inside a plastic-covered greenhouse. There, he hopes, the waste from the fish he's tending will help him raise enough lettuce, tomatoes and other produce to feed his family of five year-round. Sustainability is more than a buzzword for Meir Lazar, 32, a computer systems administrator and teacher who's pursuing aquaponics in his small suburban backyard off Greenspring Avenue. He said he's inspired at least in part by news reports about food tainted by pesticides, bacteria and even radiation from the Japanese nuclear reactor meltdown earlier this year. "I think it's incumbent on every person to start growing their own food so they can take back some of the control over their health, over what's in their food," he said. "There, at least, you know it's pesticide-free. ... Plus, you have a deeper appreciation of what you've grown and what you're about to eat." Aquaponics has been around at least since the early 1970s, when the New Alchemy Institute in Massachusetts started promoting backyard fish farming and organic gardening inside greenhouses it dubbed "bioshelters." It's gained new attention in recent years, not just from advocates of sustainable agriculture but from those who believe aquaponics can help fill needs in poor urban communities for healthier food and jobs. The model for that is Growing Power, an urban farm and educational foundation in Milwaukee started by Will Allen, who grew up on a farm in Maryland.

FREDERICK NEWS POST

From Early Bird Editorial: Fracking concerns Hydraulic fracturing, nicknamed "fracking," is back in the news, and Marylanders -- particularly those residing in Allegany and Garrett counties -- should take notice. Readers will recall that fracking involves injecting water and chemicals into rock formations, such as shale, to facilitate release of the natural gas that the rock holds. Fracking is being used in a number of locations throughout the U.S., including parts of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Of interest regionally is the large Marcellus Shale formation that runs beneath northern Appalachia, including Western Maryland. Just last week, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a cautionary report about the fracking taking place in Pavillion, Wyo., where, it says, fracking may be contaminating groundwater. According to a recent Capital News Service story, the draft EPA report "describes high levels of benzene, synthetic chemicals and methane in private drinking water wells near Pavillion, Wyo., where fracking is widespread." To be clear, a link between fracking and this contamination has not yet been proved. In fact, according to the CNS story, Encana Corp., "which owns the natural gas field in question, issued a news release this week criticizing the EPA study's methodology and findings. 'Natural gas developers didn't put the natural gas at the bottom of the EPA's deep monitoring wells, nature did,' the statement read in part." In addition, there may be significant differences in the geologic character and fracking techniques in Wyoming and those used in Western Maryland. All of this adds up to a big question mark regarding fracking in Maryland. Is it safe enough to pursue and reap the enormous economic benefits that it would produce? The current uncertainty about all this makes Gov. Martin O'Malley's May executive order a good one. That order called for a three-year moratorium on fracking while the state takes a good hard look at the technology. The recent developments in Wyoming are proof that, at the very least, issues remain to be sorted out.

CARROLL COUNTY TIMES

From Early Bird Editorial: Help reduce waste Even if you weren't as careful as you might have hoped to be about cutting down on waste over the holiday season, there are still plenty of things that you can do now to reduce the amount of trash that your family generates. The Environmental Protection Agency said that the average U.S. household generates 25 percent more trash in the period between Thanksgiving and New Years than they normally do through the rest of the year. That's a huge increase. In recent years we've become more attuned to the increase, as well as the reasons for it, and more and more families and businesses are doing their part to reduce that amount. Many businesses use less in their packaging of products. This cuts down on the amount of waste. Many also utilize more recycled materials, or they use materials that can be recycled. All those boxes that the gifts came in can probably be recycled. And just about every community now has some sort of program in which residents can recycle their Christmas trees. Now is also a good time to review the types of materials that the county collects for recycling. Since going to single stream recycling, more residents are recycling more materials, thus keeping trash out of the landfill. Knowing what is accepted is the first step toward reducing the amount of stuff that we just throw away. The new year is just around the corner, so it is a perfect time to make a resolution to do more to conserve our limited resources and protect the planet through increasing the amount of materials that we recycle. Together, we can help bring down that 25 percent increase that is seen in the average household trash during the holiday season. And by extension, by embracing the same philosophy of good environmental stewardship throughout the year, we can greatly reduce the amount of trash going in to our landfills each week.

SEVERNAPARKPATCH

Some Good News for the Chesapeake Bay

Underwater grasses on the Susquehanna Flats survived Tropical Storm Lee and findings by researchers point to decreasing size of dead zones. Lately it seems that most every article I read about the health of the Chesapeake Bay deals with the ongoing problem of trying to restore the Bay and its tributaries. During the past week, two stories have come to my attention that deal with something positive concerning the health of the Bay. Last week the Baltimore CBS affiliate, WJZ, reported that underwater grasses on the Susquehanna Flats survived the horrific discharge of silt-laden flood water that flowed through the Conowingo Dam from the Susquehanna River after Tropical Storm Lee. It was initially feared that force of the water discharged through the floodgates at the dam would severely damage the grass beds in that area. Lee Karrh of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources told WJZ reporter Alex Demetrick that "The good news is, they're still there," referring to the grass beds on the Susquehanna Flats. An aerial survey revealed that most of the grass beds had survived the storm.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWS

Changes are likely to Md. clean bay plan (Dec. 23) Maryland's plan for reducing pollution flowing into the Chesapeake Bay, which was due to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by midnight Dec. 15, is likely to be revised with more detail before the federal agency decides in July whether and how to alter it. Environmental groups, meanwhile, say the state's local governments, whose individual documents were used by the Maryland Department of the Environment to craft the statewide Watershed Implementation Plan, must commit to more specific pollution-reduction strategies and come up with ways to pay for them. "Apart from a

few exceptions, they are weak across the board,” said Claudia Friedetzky, conservation representative with the Maryland chapter of the Sierra Club, speaking of county plans submitted by the Nov. 18 deadline that the Sierra Club was able to review. Environmentalists say excessive nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment are major bay pollutants. They have identified agricultural runoff, sewage treatment plants, septic systems, lawn fertilizers and vehicle exhaust as among the culprits. Baltimore County's plans stood out as excellent for the level of detail and scientific underpinnings, Friedetzky said. St. Mary's and Dorchester counties were good because they identified solid next steps, she said. Friedetzky said that Charles County's plan did not include local total maximum daily load standards for the Mattawoman Creek and the Port Tobacco River. TMDL refers to the maximum pounds of nutrients per year a watershed can handle before it is considered impaired, according to the EPA.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

Researchers Put Farm Fish on Vegetarian Diet

Concern over the dietary needs of 'domesticated' fish, researchers have developed a different kind of diet using wheat, corn, soy and algae meal. BALTIMORE (AP) — Researchers say they may have overcome a roadblock in efforts to satisfy the world's growing demand for seafood through fish-farming. While more fish are being farmed, taking pressure off wild stocks, environmentalists and fisheries experts are concerned that expanding current fish-farming methods will not be sustainable for many species because that would require more smaller fish to be caught for feed. And that can affect stocks of larger wild fish higher on the food chain.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

From Early Bird Making a Difference: Battling climate change Forget soccer mom. Meet enviro mom. Elli Sparks, mother of two, is walking the walk for the environment and against climate change. To limit energy use linked to global warming, Sparks tends a garden and raises hens in an "itty, bitty city henhouse" behind her home in Woodland Heights in South Richmond. Sparks works at home as a fundraiser for nonprofits, which means less driving. She bikes. She uses a clothesline, not a dryer. She keeps her thermostat low. "We have the kids wear sweaters instead of using heat," said Sparks, a 5-foot, dark-haired ball of energy. Her husband, Rob Staropoli, 42, is on board environmentally. Working at home as a cabinetmaker, he uses special glues and finishes that give off little or no pollution. Sparks, 45, a Baltimore native who was raised a Lutheran, now practices a nondenominational form of worship that drives her environmentalism. Her religion, she said, involves "a very personal understanding of my spiritual relationship with the creator and creation." She would like that creation to stay intact. And that's where her battle against climate change comes in. Sparks spent five years tending to her son, Peter, now 10, who was born with a heart defect. Surgery finally healed Peter, and Sparks, who had put her passion for environmentalism aside during Peter's period of ill health, began to look into the issues about two years ago.

Urban Grid capitalizing on interest in solar energy Blue Crump started Urban Grid Solar Inc. in 2010 after seeing a growing interest in solar energy. "From an installation and equipment cost perspective, solar energy is less expensive now than it has been historically," he said. "Energy rates will increase. This allows for businesses to hedge against those rising costs." The company is a Richmond-based renewable-energy development firm and a general and alternative energy systems contractor. It also provides solar financing and development, solar installations, energy monitoring and services in other renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar thermal hot water. "As the business has evolved, the energy sector, especially solar, has outpaced anything we do," Crump said.

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT

From Early Bird Editorial: Long-awaited pollution controls The sooty handwriting has been on the wall for years now. Long-discussed restrictions on coal-fired power plants are now in effect, likely prompting electric companies to shut some down rather than undertake costly improvements. Critics predict all manner of calamity as a result, including blackouts. But a recent Associated Press survey of power companies indicate that service interruptions are unlikely and that many of the plants are already near or past their expected life span. According to The AP, the new regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency will hasten the closure of more than 32 mostly coal-fired plants and could lead to the shutdown of 36 others nationwide. That's about 8 percent of America's coal plants. The transition won't be easy. Plant employees will lose jobs if they're not transferred, and localities will lose tax revenue if the facilities aren't replaced or if equivalent investments aren't made in other energy sources. But the changes have been a long time coming. The average age of the affected plants is 51 years, The AP found. Many of them were due for closure or upgrading years ago, but power companies were allowed to fend off installation of modern pollution controls.

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

From Early Bird Create a Can program protects sewers (Dec. 23) Schoolchildren take home decorated soup cans to serve as grease collectors over the holidays. Schoolchildren in Hampton are carrying an important environmental message home for the holidays. An activity called Create a Can allows elementary kids to use construction paper, cutouts and paints to decorate empty soup cans. While they work, they hear a story about how grease from cooking holiday foods like turkeys and roasts should go in the can — not down the drain. Then, each student takes home a decorated can so their family can collect grease, let it harden and then throw it in the trash. "The students are so excited to make a difference," said Brianna Venner, coordinator of the city's FOG, or fats, oils and grease, program. "Young people have so much enthusiasm and will help spread the information." Why worry about grease down the drain? When grease is poured in the drain, it cools, hardens and sticks to the sides of the pipe. Over time, grease buildup can become so great that it blocks the flow, creating backups in homes and onto streets. Damaging greases include meat fats, lard, shortening, butter/margarine, food scraps, dairy products, batters, dressings, icing and sauces. "Currently, about half of all sanitary sewer overflows in the Hampton Roads region are caused by fats, oil and grease," said Venner. "This is a big concern because sanitary sewer overflows can potentially flow into the storm drain, which is an untreated system that leads to the Chesapeake Bay."

The end of coal plants in Hampton Roads?

Two plants slated to close; construction of another is delayed By Cory Nealon. The Yorktown Power Station and Chesapeake Energy Center, the two largest coal-fired power plants in Hampton Roads, burn on average 6,700 tons of coal every day. The plants, which date to the 1950s, create enough electricity for 260,000 households. Yet both will soon stop burning coal, which is subject to new federal rules that aim to cut the amount of mercury, ozone and other pollutants entering the nation's air and waterways. Ceasing those operations, combined with a stalled effort to build a massive coal-fired power plant in Surry County, has put Hampton Roads on a path away from the potent, yet dirty, fossil fuel. The shift has the potential to reduce premature deaths, asthma and other respiratory ailments, as well as spur investment in renewable energy. But it also may result in higher utility bills, put pressure on other areas of Virginia to make up for the lost power, and cause further investment in a controversial method of obtaining natural gas. It is for those reasons that the possible abandonment of coal as an energy source in Hampton Roads is the Daily Press' top science and environment story of 2011. ...Dominion plans to convert part of the Yorktown plant to natural gas, a fossil fuel that burns cleaner than coal. The decision is based, in part, on new discoveries of gas buried underground in shale formations. ...The method of tapping shale gas, called hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," stirs controversy — the EPA earlier this month said for the first time that fracking may cause groundwater pollution. In addition to natural gas, Dominion is investing in biomass — a renewable form of energy that involves the burning of living or recently living materials — to meet electricity demands it expects will grow by 30 percent by 2026.... "We're working on getting rid of the coal plants," she said. "The biggest challenge now is to replace them with renewable energy."

Register for Va. special license plate to show your love for treesAt least 450 applications are needed by Dec. 31 to help fund tree educationIf you love trees and want to help preserve them, you can help the effort with an application for the special Virginia Loves Trees license plate. At least 450 applications for the plate are needed by the end of December. "You do not have to wait for your current plate to expire before you apply for the Virginia Loves Trees specialty license plate," said Sarah Gugercin, application coordinator for the nonprofit group at <http://www.valovestrees.org>.

WILLIAMSBURG YORKTOWN DAILY

From Early Bird Planned Coal Plant Application Will Be up for New Hearing, Vote After mulling over their options, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative's board decided to re-apply for zoning and land use changes for its planned coal-fired power plant in Surry after a previous approval was voided by a local court last month. ODEC plans to build a 1,500-megawatt power plant on about 1,600 acres in the town of Dendron. In 2010, the Dendron Town Council voted to approve zoning and land use changes that would allow the project to go forward, but four citizens argued that the public hearing on the vote wasn't properly advertised. Their court challenge was upheld by Surry County's Circuit Court judge, who ruled that the change wasn't valid. Read a previous story on the challenge with a video of the meeting here. ODEC's Board of Directors met last week to decide how to proceed. After mulling over various options including everything from appealing the judge's decision to choosing a new location, the board decided to put forward their application again for a vote, according to ODEC spokesman Bill Sherrod. This time, Sherrod said, the wording will be clearer. This hang-up didn't affect the timeline for the plant, though, as the air permit had already been withdrawn and the project is still currently on

hold. Sherrod said ODEC is waiting to see how new Environmental Protection Agency regulations on mercury emissions might affect the project. "Cypress Creek is on hold, but that doesn't mean we're not still interested in going forward," he said. "The demand for electricity increases every day, and we have to provide people with the power they need." ODEC is a generation-and-transmission cooperative that provides wholesale power to 11 member distribution cooperatives in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. ODEC and its member systems are not-for-profit electric cooperatives that are owned by consumers.

LYNCHBURG NEWS AND ADVANCE

From Early Bird Lynchburg not planning to raise sewer rates in 2012 For only the second time in recent history, Lynchburg is not planning to raise its sewer rate. Under the terms of a circa-1994 agreement with environmental regulators, the city must keep its sewer rate equal to or above 1.25 percent of local median household income. Traditionally, the obligation resulted in annual rate hikes, but this year stagnant income activity will allow the city to bypass a rate change. "From the analysis we've done so far, it doesn't look like we'll have an increase," said Utilities Director Tim Mitchell. Mitchell said he imagined the lack of income growth was due to the nationwide economic downturn, but added he couldn't speak definitively on the matter. "We just look at the data," he said. "We don't analyze why incomes are where they are." This is the second time the city has forgone a rate increase since it signed the regulatory consent order dictating its minimum sewer rate requirements. The consent order governs the city's combined sewer overflow program, a long-term initiative aimed at fixing deficiencies that cause sewers to overflow during heavy rains; a minimum sewer rate was set to ensure Lynchburg always would have money to invest in the program. The city can exceed the minimum sewer rate, but Mitchell said it is opting not to in recognition of the economic stress facing citizens. Waiving a rate increase does mean there will be fewer resources available for combined sewer overflow work. "We're not going to stop, but it will be significantly reduced," Mitchell said. The city will seek aid from federal and state sources, but early indications are there will be little help available, he said.

From Early Bird Bedford, Campbell counties may get drought assistance Bedford and Campbell counties may be eligible for disaster assistance due to drought and excessive heat from May 25 to Aug. 27. The counties are among 16 localities that can seek economic injury disaster loans due to the heat, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services said Wednesday. Loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration are available to eligible farm-related and non-farm-related entities that suffered financial losses as a result.

VIRGINIA BUSINESS MAGAZINE

Northern Neck fears effects of fishing limit

An oily, bony fish that usually measures less than seven inches will be the focus of intense and emotional public comment starting next month. The outcome of the discussion could have a big effect on the economy of Virginia's Northern Neck and the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), an interstate regulatory board, will invite public input on a proposal to cut back on Atlantic menhaden harvesting, possibly by about one-third, starting 2013. The average annual landings of menhaden on the East Coast from 2000 to 2009 was about 427 million pounds. Of that total, Virginia accounted for an average of 388 million pounds a year, making Reedsville one of the largest commercial fishing ports in the

U.S.If ASMFC decides to limit the catch, Northern Neck counties fear some of the roughly 300 menhaden harvesting and processing workers employed by Houston-based Omega Protein could lose their jobs. Trickle-down losses could hit other companies. "It would be devastating from a standpoint of employment," says Northumberland County Administrator Kenny Eads. "In a county of 13,000 people, where a third of them are retired, you see how small our work force is and how much Omega [which accounts for 80 percent of the menhaden catch] means." Unemployment in Northumberland is now 7 percent; Eads estimates it would reach 15 percent with the menhaden harvest reduction.

VIRGINIA BUSINESS

A turn in the road? General Assembly to weigh pros, cons of uranium mining After a 30-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service that included posts in Egypt, Thailand, Jamaica and Russia, Walter Coles Sr. returned to his native Pittsylvania County in 2000 to retire. The Vietnam War veteran planned to raise cattle on the farm his family has owned since 1785 and live in the 1817 Georgian-style brick home that has housed his family for five generations. But just a few years later, the calls started coming. Uranium prices had begun to rise around the same time a Virginia Tech doctoral student wrote a well-read thesis on two previously discovered uranium deposits underneath the pastures of the Coles farm. ... The potential threat to water supplies has caught the attention of Virginia's largest city, Virginia Beach. The city spent \$600,000 on two studies to determine the effect of the breaching of tailings containment facilities on its water supply, which is downstream from the proposed uranium sites. The study concluded it would take two years for contaminants to be cleaned from the water under this scenario. "The [city council's] current position is that there are just too many studies coming out this month or early next year, and there's simply no time for the public or the city to properly consider these studies for any action," says Tom Leahy, public utilities director for Virginia Beach. Virginia Uranium says the study was based on containment cells that would be kept above ground, while the company plans to keep tailings below grade as well as in underground holes created during the mining process. The NAS study said this method was environmentally more sound than above-grade containments. Cotter Corp.'s uranium mill near Canon City, Colo., provides a cautionary tale on the importance of properly managing tailings. The mill, which operated off and on between 1958 and 2005, received many citations for air and water contamination and was declared a Superfund site in 1984. In 2005, a state regulator determined that even a tailings pond built under current regulations was determined unusable. In 2009, Colorado required Cotter to post a financial bond of \$43 million to help pay for cleanup of the site, but the company so far has paid only \$20.8 million of that amount.

MISCELLANEOUS

WALL STREET JOURNAL

From Early Bird Commentary: The Coal Age Nears Its End After burning coal to light up Cincinnati for six decades, the Walter C. Beckjord Generating Station will go dark soon—a fate that will be shared by dozens of aging coal-fired power plants across the U.S. in coming years. Their owners cite a raft of new air-pollution regulations from the Environmental Protection

Agency, including a rule released Wednesday that limits mercury and other emissions, for the shut-downs. But energy experts say there is an even bigger reason coal plants are losing out: cheap and abundant natural gas, which is booming thanks to a surge in production from shale-rock formations in the U.S. "Inexpensive natural gas is the biggest threat to coal," says Jone-Lin Wang, head of global power research for IHS CERA, a research company. "Nothing else even comes close." For decades, coal produced more electricity than all other fuels combined, and as recently as 2003 accounted for almost 51% of net electricity generation, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. But its share has dropped sharply in the last couple of years. It fell to 43% for the first nine months of 2011, as natural gas's share has jumped to almost 25% from under 17% in 2003. Meanwhile, gas prices, on average, have fallen 37 cents to \$4.02 per million British thermal units so far this year.

Shale Gas Boom Spurs Race The boom in low-cost natural gas obtained from shale is driving investment in plants that use gas for fuel or as a raw material, setting off a race by states to attract such factories and the jobs they create. Shale-gas production is spurring construction of plants that make chemicals, plastics, fertilizer, steel and other products. A report issued earlier this month by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC estimated that such investments could create a million U.S. manufacturing jobs over the next 15 years. West Virginia is vying with Pennsylvania and Ohio to attract an ethylene plant that Royal Dutch Shell PLC said it plans to build in the Appalachian region to take advantage of the plentiful new gas supplies. Shell is due to announce a site early in 2012. Ethylene, produced from ethane in natural gas, is used to make plastics and other materials that go into an array of products, including pipes, paint and antifreeze. West Virginia's legislature, meeting in a special session, passed a bill this month setting rules for shale gas drilling and production. The legislation ensures "a reliable supply" of shale gas in West Virginia and should dispel regulatory uncertainty that could slow investment, Keith Burdette, the state's commerce secretary, said in an interview. The U.S. chemical industry is the biggest potential winner from the shale boom—which involves a technique opposed by some environmentalists called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to obtain gas locked in rock formations—but other industries also see benefits.

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE

From Early Bird Drilling a financial boon to some states AUSTIN, Texas — While the Eagle Ford shale boom in Texas isn't the first that Daryl Fowler has seen, the DeWitt County judge is working to ensure that his community will be left with new roads and housing when the oil and gas are gone. Fowler, whose non-judicial post gives him administrative control over the county 70 miles southeast of San Antonio, has negotiated an \$8,000-per-well fee from drilling companies to pay for roads. The county was able to reduce its property-tax rate by 18 percent this year while total assessed value jumped 27 percent as producers sought permits to drill more than 340 wells. "It takes 270 loads of gravel just to build a pad used for drilling a well, which means a lot of truck traffic on a lot of roads that nobody except Grandpa Schultz and some deer hunters may have used in the past," Fowler, 55, said in a telephone interview.

USA TODAY

From Early Bird Fed workers' pay gains are slowest in 10 years The paychecks of federal workers grew at the slowest pace in a decade this year, held down by a partial pay freeze. But

federal employees still did slightly better than workers in the private sector or at state and local governments, a USA TODAY analysis found. Federal pay rose an average of 1.3% for the budget year that ended Sept. 30, according to newly released federal data. By comparison, the wages of private workers rose 1.2% during the period, the same rate as state and local government pay growth, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. None of the wage gains kept pace with inflation. The federal pay numbers are the first full budget-year results since President Obama canceled automatic cost-of-living pay hikes in 2011 and 2012. Federal employees still get raises for longevity, merit and promotions. But 2.1 million civil servants did not get a scheduled 0.9% inflation adjustment this year, saving the government about \$2 billion a year, or a 1.1% across-the-board pay hike scheduled for Jan. 1.

From Early Bird Federal workers starting at much higher pay than in past Newly hired federal workers are starting at much higher salaries than those who did the same jobs in the past, a lift that has elevated the salaries of scientists and custodians alike. The pay hikes have made the federal government a go-to place for many young people. A 20- to 24-year-old auto mechanic started at an average of \$46,427 this year, up from \$36,750 five years ago. The government hires about 400 full-time auto mechanics a year. A 30- to 34-year-old lawyer started at an average of \$101,045 this year, up from \$79,177 five years ago. The government hires about 2,500 lawyers a year. And a mechanical engineer, age 25 to 29, started at \$63,675, up from \$51,746 in 2006. The government hires about 600 mechanical engineers a year. Behind the boost: The government is classifying more new hires — secretaries, mail clerks, chaplains, laundry workers, electrical engineers and wildlife biologists — as taking more demanding versions of their jobs and deserving more pay. The higher pay also reflects the more challenging jobs federal workers often do. The Bureau of Prisons' 1,250 cooks earn an average of \$66,225 a year. "They don't just cook meals. They're also correctional workers supervising inmates," spokeswoman Traci Billingsley says.

From Early Bird Federal pay for 100 occupations

ASSOCIATED PRESS

From Early Bird EPA forces dirtiest power plants to clean up toxic air pollution, but gives leeway on timing That's the decision facing hundreds of the nation's oldest and dirtiest power plants under an Environmental Protection Agency rule announced Wednesday that will force plants to control mercury and other toxic pollutants for the first time. The long overdue national standards rein in the largest remaining source of uncontrolled toxic pollution in the U.S. — the emissions from the nation's coal- and oil-fired power plants, which have been allowed to run for decades without addressing their full environmental and public health costs. The impact of the ruling will be greatest in the Midwest and in the coal belt — Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia — where dozens of units likely will be mothballed, according to an Associated Press survey. The majority of facilities will continue to run, and find ways to reduce pollution. About half of the 1,200 coal- and oil-fired units nationwide still lack modern pollution controls, despite the EPA in 1990 getting the authority from Congress to control toxic air pollution from power plant smokestacks. A decade later, in 2000, the agency concluded it was necessary to clamp down on the emissions to protect public health. At a news conference Wednesday at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the regulation was the Obama administration's "biggest clean air action yet", trumping a landmark agreement

to double fuel economy standards for vehicles and another rule that will reduce emissions from power plants that foul the air in states downwind.

From Early Bird Budget woes, heavier storms pose challenges for cities struggling to control sewage overflows

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — The Obama administration says it will be more flexible when pushing financially struggling cities to upgrade their sewage systems to prevent overflows that foul U.S. waterways with harmful bacteria and viruses. The Environmental Protection Agency has reached legal settlements on sewer overflows with more than 40 cities and counties since the late 1990s. Many require improvements costing hundreds of millions of dollars. The U.S. Conference of Mayors says the price is getting too steep with the economic downturn, which has cut into tax revenues. EPA officials say they'll allow greater use of cheaper alternatives, including "green infrastructure" such as rain gardens and permeable pavement that reduce the amount of storm water flowing into sewers.

From Early Bird Despite green times, NJ recycling less CHERRY HILL, N.J. - Recycling has slipped in New Jersey, even as the world has become more environmentally conscious. Nearly 25 years ago, the state became the first to require residents to recycle. But participation has slipped. In 1995, 45 percent of the waste picked up by municipal collectors was headed for recycling. By 2009, it was down to 37 percent, just barely ahead of the national rate of 34 percent. Advocates tell The Philadelphia Inquirer (<http://bit.ly/tR04ru>) they hope a tax on trash dumping, which was reinstated in 2008 after being eliminated a dozen years earlier, will help encourage recycling. They also have high hopes for a new wave of recycling programs that do not require people to separate bottles and paper.

Natural Gas Fueling Plans May Spur Vehicle Growth

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The United States has record supplies of natural gas and plenty of reasons to promote natural-gas powered cars, but so consumers, manufacturers and fuel suppliers haven't shown much interest. Now, a major natural gas developer's plans to vastly increase the number of truck stops that offer liquid natural gas could help boost its use in the vehicles that burn the most fuel, while promoting its availability to a wider market. Lots of natural gas is available, if U.S. drivers decide to use it. In just a few years, domestic natural gas supplies have increased by trillions of cubic feet through shale finds, boosting the supply to the point where plans are in place to export part of the overflow. The growth of natural gas vehicles in the United States so far has been dominated by fleets of buses, taxis, and garbage haulers

LOHUD.COM

NY can learn from Pennsylvania's fracking experience **WILLIAMSPORT** — Set amid steep forested hills on the banks of the west branch of the Susquehanna River, this little northern Pennsylvania city has always had its charms. It once was considered the lumber capital of the world. West Fourth Street was dubbed Millionaire's Row for the baronial homes that lined it. And, of course, Williamsport has for decades been home to iconic Little League baseball and hosts the kids' world championship every summer. But Little League and aging Victorian mansions only go so far. If Williamsport's charms hadn't faded, neither had they been renewed. Then, about five years ago, natural-gas land-leasing agents swarmed into northern Pennsylvania, and residents began to realize that, for better or worse, the gas trapped in the

Marcellus Shale deep below their feet was about to change everything.

NEW YORK TIMES

Op-Ed: Springtime for Toxics

Here's what I wanted for Christmas: something that would make us both healthier and richer. And since I was just making a wish, why not ask that Americans get smarter, too? Surprise: I got my wish, in the form of new Environmental Protection Agency standards on mercury and air toxics for power plants. These rules are long overdue: we were supposed to start regulating mercury more than 20 years ago. But the rules are finally here, and will deliver huge benefits at only modest cost. So, naturally, Republicans are furious. But before I get to the politics, let's talk about what a good thing the E.P.A. just did. As far as I can tell, even opponents of environmental regulation admit that mercury is nasty stuff. It's a potent neurotoxicant: the expression "mad as a hatter" emerged in the 19th century because hat makers of the time treated fur with mercury compounds, and often suffered nerve and mental damage as a result.

MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Does shale boom mean US energy independence near?TOWANDA, Pa. -- Ever since Richard Nixon's 1973 promise to attain energy independence, successive U.S. presidents all have pledged the same goal, even as foreign supplies composed a larger and larger share of the U.S. energy mix. Now, almost 40 years later, a measure of independence is within reach. But as this booming mountain town in northeastern Pennsylvania shows, the quest for independence involves both opportunities and trade-offs. It may surprise Americans who've lived through many years of dependence on foreign fuels, but in less than a decade the United States could pass its 1970s peak as an oil and natural gas producer. If that happens -- and many analysts think it's possible -- the United States would edge past Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world's top energy producer.... However, the biggest potential game changer for U.S. energy production is natural gas, which previously had been supplied largely from the Gulf of Mexico region. Just a few years ago, terminals were being built at U.S. ports in anticipation of importing natural gas; today, there's talk of exporting it. Technological advances have allowed drillers to go down almost 7,000 feet, smashing through rock formations and drilling horizontally, freeing trapped oil and gas that long had been considered inaccessible. "Shale gas, the biggest energy innovation since the start of the new century, has turned what was an imminent shortage in the United States into what may be a hundred-year supply and may do the same elsewhere in the world," Daniel Yergin, the world's most prominent oil historian, wrote in his new book about energy security, "The Quest."

FUELFIX

Fracking opens fissures among states as drillers face many rules Pennsylvania regulators ordered Chesapeake Energy Corp. to install pressure gauges costing as little as \$600 on 114 of its wells after natural gas contaminated drinking water last year. Officials rejected a call from environmental groups to order safety devices for all similar natural-gas wells, a requirement in neighboring Ohio. A boom in gas production using hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has led to a patchwork of local drilling standards. Now, several states are revising or formulating rules, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is studying the effects of fracking on drinking water and weighing nationwide regulations. "What you're seeing now is the federal government trying to get into the game of regulating hydraulic fracturing for the very first time," Ken von

Schaumburg, a Washington-based attorney and former EPA deputy general counsel in George W. Bush's administration, said in an interview.

PUBLIC RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Environmental Protection Agency has rough 2011, shows uneven progress It was a tough year for the Environmental Protection Agency — then again what's new? Environmentalists celebrated when the EPA raised concerns about the environmental impact of the Keystone XL pipeline. President Barack Obama asked for more studies on the pipeline, delaying its implementation to 2013. On the other hand, people were furious when Obama directed the EPA to re-examine its proposed guidelines for reducing smog. But one measure that got little publicity was a requirement that car manufacturers raise the fuel mileage of their new vehicles to an average of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2020, said Politico reporter Erica Martinson. "They've done a lot to encourage some trucks that have better fuel economy - that's something quite new. But, I think that it seemed to sort of slide by in the national eye," she said. Another major issue that will carry over into next year is the question of fracking. Not long ago, the EPA ruled that fracking could be damaging drinking water in Wyoming. Now, they're being asked to implement rules on the disposal of fracking fluid. Plus, they'll have to green-light fracking in the Marcellus Shale, which would be a big boon for the domestic natural gas industry. "(It) changes the game a lot for EPA, in the way they decide to do certain air emissions rules," Martinson said. "The price of natural gas has gone down so dramatically that it opens it up for a lot more options for regulating utilities and power plants."

NPR/NEWSWORKS

Stalemate continues for gas drilling in Delaware River Basin*A stalemate continues when it comes to gas drilling in the Delaware River Basin. The four states that share the basin can't agree on how to regulate the industry. This is just one in a long line of interstate conflicts over the Delaware River. State Impact Pennsylvania's Susan Phillips reports on the complicated ways water gets divvied up among the basin's residents.* It takes a lot of water to quench the thirst of 15 million people. "Now right now in the river we have stage of elevation of about 6.3 feet...." Standing on the banks of the Delaware River in Milford, Pennsylvania, looking across to Montague, New Jersey, geologist Gary Paulachok talks about his job as the Delaware Rivermaster for the past 12 years. "...corresponds to a flow of about oh, about 3,500 cubic feet per second." He's the guy who makes sure all that thirst doesn't make the river run dry. Or more precisely, he makes sure the salt water line doesn't creep up to Philadelphia's intake pipes in the Northeast section of the city. "And that is a very significant reason why this flow is maintained at 1750, to keep the salt front down far enough down in the estuary, so it doesn't effect the city of Philadelphia's water supply or the water supplies in New Jersey." From his tightly packed room in an office park in Milford, he tracks the vagaries of weather, the water releases of a nearby nuclear power plant, and other unwelcome surprises.